

T W E N T Y
S E R M O N S
O N

Several Subjects :

Most of them PREACHED in the

CATHEDRAL of Y O R K.

By the Late REVEREND

VALENTINE NALSON, M. A. ~~X~~

Prebendary of R I P O N.

L O N D O N :

Printed for FRANCIS HILDYARD, Book-
seller in *York*; and are to be Sold by
W. TAYLOR in *Pater-Noster-Row*, and
J. BOWYER in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*.

M. DCC. XXIV.

286/6

TWENTY

SEVEN

Subjects



CATHEDRAL

NEW YORK

NEW YORK

NEW YORK

LONDON

REVISED EDITION

NEW YORK

NEW YORK

NEW YORK

At Dec. xiv.





To the Reverend and Honourable

Mr. *HENRY FINCH*,
Dean of *YORK*;

AND

To the Reverend and Honourable

Mr. *EDWARD FINCH*,
Prebendary and Residentiary of the
said *CATHEDRAL*.

REVEREND and HONOURABLE,



THE Author of the
following Discourses,
having had the Ho-
nour and Happiness of your
Patro-

The DEDICATION.

Patronage whilst living; and your selves Auditors, when several of them were preached in that Cathedral, where one of you most worthily presides as Dean, and both as Residentiaries, and excellent Governours; will, I hope, not only excuse the Publisher, but have your Approbation, for prefixing your Names. to these his Labours in the Work of his Ministry; which, with what Faithfulness, Care and Diligence he discharged, you had the Satisfaction to be Eyewitnesses, in the Cure, where Providence and Your singular Respect had placed him, and which procured him that Esteem and Love with his Parishioners, and several others
of

The DEDICATION.

of this City, whom he by his excellent and useful Discourses, his sweet and agreeable Delivery, had gained to be his frequent Auditors, and even made his Memory dear to them whilst they live.

These are the genuine Remains of that late pious and good Man, and excellent Preacher, which himself prepared and fitted for the Press in the Time of his Health, and which a few Days before he died (as he expressed) *he dedicated to the Service of God, who had given him them*; and added (which I mention with Pleasure, that I should be so much in his Thoughts and Favor) *That he would have them*

The DEDICATION.

committed to me to publish; and which he left as his last and best Legacy to the World, and in particular to his dearly beloved Parishioners; for whom living and dying he had that most tender and affectionate Regard, which did best become one set over them, to watch for their Souls.

As these Discourses are pathetick and just, full of sound Reasoning and powerful Persuasion, so they are the Breathings of a devout Soul. His Elocution was grave and moving, and such as gave Life and Energy to what he spoke, which must needs be wanting in these printed Sermons; but yet, as they were writ, as well

The DEDICATION.

as spoke from the Heart, it is to be hoped they will not fail to reach the Heart of every pious Reader.

He *believed*, he *felt*, he *lived* the Doctrine he preached; and as he was intimately acquainted with the secret Powers of a spiritual Life; so was he fully enabled, and the better qualified to teach it others. And what he inculcated to others [That the conforming our *Wills* to *God's Will*, constitutes both our Holiness and Happiness] was a Lesson, which he had all his Life-time been endeavouring to learn, and to practise; and how well he had learnt it, and how throughly he had brought his

The DEDICATION.

own Heart and Soul into Subjection to the divine Will, all are Witnesſes, who were the moſt frequent Viſitors of him in his laſt, long, tedious, and painful Languiſhments, and ſaw with what entire Reſignation, perfect Willingneſs, and even with Lauds and Praises to the Almighty and Merciful Creator, he reſigned his laſt Breath.

Such was his Life, ſand ſuch was his Death! and may the Lovelineſs of his pious Example, both in living and dying, incite all others, as well as thoſe of the ſame ſacred Function, to imitate and practiſe his Virtues, to live the Life of the Righteous, that their latter

The DEDICATION.

latter End may be like his.

I have here a very fair Occasion offered, to take Notice of your own most excellent Qualities and Endowments, but having had your exprefs Commands to the contrary, I forbear, and beg leave to subscribe,

Reverend and Honourable,

Your most Obedient,

most humble and

obliged Servant,

FRANCIS HILDYARD.

THE DEDICATION.

I have been a very fair Oc-
 casion offered to take Notice
 of your own most excellent
 Quaint and Endowments but
 having had your exploits Com-
 manded to the captivity, I for-
 sook, and best leave to sub-
 scribe
 I am, Sir, Your most Obedient
 Servant, and Humble Son
 John Wren



THE
NAMES
OF THE
SUBSCRIBERS.

A.

DR. Audley, *Chancellor of the
Diocese of York, two Books.*

B.

*The Reverend Mr. Bradley, Residen-
tiary of the Church of York.*

—Samuel Brearey, D. D. *Succentor
and Prebend of York.*

—Dr. Blake, *Archdeacon of York.*

—Mr. Bark of Snaith, *Yorkshire.*

—Mr. Henry Brearey, *Rector of
Boxworth, Cambridgshire.*

—Mr. Buck, *Prebendary of Ripon.*

—Mr. Barnard of East Witton,
Yorkshire. Hugh

The NAMES of

Hugh Bethell of Ryse, *Esq*; Yorksh.

Dr. Barnard of York.

Mrs. Byerley of Goldsbrough,
Yorkshire.

Mr. Christopher Boyse *Junior* of
York.

C.

The Reverend Mr. Cook, *Prebendary*
of York.

——Mr. Cookson, *Prebendary* of
Ripon.

Mr. John Cook, *Bookseller* in Sher-
borne.

Mrs. Cressy of York, *two Books*.

D.

The Reverend Mr. Darcey Dalton,
Prebendary of York.

——Mr. Dingley, *Rector* of All-
Saints in the Pavement in York.

Mr. Samuel Dawson, *Merchant* in
York.

Mr. William Dobson, *Apothecary* in
York.

Abstrupus Danby of Farnley, York-
shire, *Esq*; *three Books*.

Christopher Driffeld, *Esq*; *Recorder*
of Ripon. *The*

the SUBSCRIBERS.

*The Reverend Mr. Dubourdieu, Rec-
tor of Kirby Overcare, Yorkshire.*

E.

Mr. William Etty of York.

*The Reverend Mr. William Elsley,
Prebendary of York.*

F.

—— *Mr. Joseph Foster, Vicar of Nor-
ton, in the Bishoprick of Durham.*

—— *Mr. Joseph Fuller, Rector of
Bishophill the Younger, in York.*

G.

—— *Mr. Gibson of South Kirby,
two Books.*

H.

*The Honourable the Lady Elizabeth
Hastings.*

*The Reverend Mr. Thomas Hill,
Lecturer of Bradford, Yorkshire.*

K.

*The Reverend Mr. William Knight,
Subchanter of Vicars Choral, York.*

—— *Mr. Richard Kery, Rector of
Moor-Monckton, Yorkshire.*

George

The NAMES of

L.

George Lawson of Harlsey, Yorkshire, *Esq*;

The Reverend Mr. Lovet, Vicar of Pocklington, Yorkshire.

—*Mr. Lamplugh, Residentiary of the Church of York.*

Ralph Lowther, *Esq*;

M.

The Reverend Mr. John Morrice, Rector of Burghwallis, Yorkshire.

—*Mr. Musgrave, Vicar of Shillington, Yorkshire.*

—*Mr. Man, Rector of Terrington, Yorkshire.*

O.

—*Mr. Osbaldeston, Rector of Hunmandby, Yorkshire.*

P.

—*Mr. Pollard, Minister at Beeston, Yorkshire.*

—*Mr. John Plaxton, Rector of Sutton upon Darwin, Yorkshire.*

Mrs. Power of York, two Books.

Mr. Darcey Preston, Town Clerk of York, four Books. *The*

the SUBSCRIBERS.

R.

The Honourable Mrs. Ramsden, Widow, York.

Mrs. Mary Ramsden, Widow.

The Reverend Mr. Richardson, Archdeacon of North Riding, Yorksh. six Books.

—*Mr. John Robinson, of Whitby, Yorkshire.*

—*Robert Redman, A. M. Fellow of King's College Cambridge.*

The Lady Redman of York.

S.

The Right Honourable the Earl of Sandwich.

Sir Philip Sydenham of Brympton de Everey, in the County of Somerset, Bar. two Books.

The Reverend Mr. Giles Sedgwick, Rector of Bolton in Bollund, Yorkshire.

Mrs. Starkey in York.

Mr. Robert Stephenson, Apothecary in York.

Mr. John Swale, Bookseller in Leeds, Yorkshire.

The

The NAMES, &c.

T.

The Reverend Mr. Tatham of Beverley, Yorkshire.

Mr. Thomas Thomson of York.

Mr. Thomas Thorp of York.

W.

Sir William Wentworth, Bar. High Sheriff of the County of York.

The Lady Wentworth.

Mrs. Wastel, Widow, of York.

Mr. William Watkinson of York.

Mr. Peter Whitton, Merchant of York, four Books.

The Reverend Mr. Waignewright of Bunny in Nottinghamshire.

—Mr. John Wakefield, Prebendary of Ripon.

—Mr. Peter Wynn, Vicar of Snaith, Yorkshire.



SERMON I.

PROV. XXIII. 26.

My Son, give me thine Heart.



IF God should vouchsafe to speak to any of us from Heaven, and should condescend to request, and even entreat what he might absolutely command; How, think you, would our Souls be affected in such a Case? Would not our ^a *Hearts burn within us, while he talked with us?* Would they not even melt and dissolve, while ^b *he that is a consuming Fire came so near, as to commune with us?* Should we not be all Humility, all Adoration, all Acknowledgment, all Love, all Duty, and Obedience? We should desire nothing more, than to understand his Mind clearly, that we might perform his Will exactly.

^a Luke xxiv. 32.

^b Deut. iv. 24.

B

Why

Why God has in effect done thus ; he speaks to every one of us by his holy Word, and tho' this Way of speaking be different in the Manner, yet it is the same in Substance, and ought to have the same substantial Effects. God's speaking to us in his Word has not indeed the same Effect upon our Senses, as a Voice from Heaven would have ; but it ought to have the same Effect upon our Spirits : For it carries the same Authority, it is the Effect of the same Condescension, it proceeds from the same Love, it is designed to do us the same Good ; and therefore ought to be received with the same Reverence and Humility, the same Love, Duty, and Obedience.

Let then the Liveliness of our Faith supply the Want of Sense ; let us think we hear God himself speaking to us in his holy Word, and saying to every one of us, *My Son, give me thy Heart* ; and let us attend to it with the same devout and holy Dispositions and Affections, let it have the same blessed Influence upon us, as if God had spoken it to every one of us particularly by an immediate Voice from Heaven.

The Words are a Request from God to Man ; upon the granting or denying of which, Man's Happiness, or Misery, entirely depends, and the fulfilling or defeating the great End of our Creation and Redemption.

Since, therefore, it is a Matter of so high Importance, it cannot but be highly desirable to know it, and to do it ; to contribute to both which is the Design of this present Discourse, which proposes,

several SUBJECTS.

3

I. To shew you the Meaning of the Request, and what it is to give our Hearts to God.

II. To move and urge you to comply with the Request, by the strongest, and most forcible Arguments and Motives.

The Heart is figuratively used in Scripture, sometimes for the Soul in general, and sometimes for some one principal or ruling Faculty of it in particular; sometimes, though not often, it signifies the Intellect, or Understanding; but more frequently, and indeed most commonly, it signifies the Will, and its Attendants and Dependents, the Affections; Desire, Love, Satisfaction, Pleasure, Joy, and Delight of the Soul.

But because the Free-will is the absolute Monarch in Man, and all the other Faculties are either Attendants, Assistants and Counsellors; as the Senses, Memory, Understanding and Judgment; and whatever the Will inclines to, it necessarily draws these after it; as wherever the Prince goes, the Court follows him of Course; or, they are Officers and Servants, as the executive and bodily Powers, which readily execute what the Will resolves, and punctually obey what the Will commands, to the utmost of their Power: Considering all this, I say, we may take the Heart here to signify in general the whole Man, and principally, that principal Part of Man, which is his Soul, and in the Soul the principal Faculty, which is the Free-will, Love, Affection, Desire, &c. which is to the Soul what the Heart is to the Body, the first and Self-mover, communicating Motion, Heat, and Life to all the other Faculties and Members.

To give a Thing is freely and voluntarily to part with the Possession and Use of a Thing our selves, to give it into the Possession of another for his Use and Pleasure.

To give our Hearts then to God is to give our whole selves wholly, our Souls, Bodies, Spirits, and all the Capacities, Faculties, and Powers of them; all that we are, and all that we have, without Exception or Reserve, into the Hands, as it were, and Possession of God; to be ordered, and disposed, and made use of by him for his Glory, according to his good Will and Pleasure, both in this World and the next, in Time, and to Eternity; and to do *all this* freely and voluntarily, absolutely and irrevocably.

Now if we desire a fuller and clearer View, and a livelier Sense of the Meaning of this Request; the Expression, which is the Preface and Introduction to it, will furnish us with the most proper and effectual Consideration for this Purpose: *My Son*, says he, *give me thy Heart*; intimating that we ought, by Grace, to do to our heavenly Father, what Children do, by Nature, to their earthly Parents.

And no doubt, as outward and visible Things are Copies and Images of inward and invisible, material Things of spiritual, and Nature of Grace, which is the very Foundation and Reason of the frequent Comparisons in Scripture of heavenly Things to earthly; so we may plainly discover our Duty towards God in our Duty towards Man, and see a lively Picture of the spiritual Affection we ought to bear to the Father

ther of our Spirits, in the natural Affection Children bear to the Fathers of their Flesh.

Let us see then, how a Child of the sweetest Temper and Disposition is affected towards its most tender and indulgent Father; and thence we may learn, how to give our Hearts to God our heavenly Father.

1. *First*, it has the greatest Reverence and Esteem for its Father; it thinks no Body wiser, or better, or greater than he; it believes all he says, and obeys all he commands; it believes without reasoning, and obeys without disputing: Thus it gives its Heart by giving its Understanding to him.

2. Again, it does not only reverence and admire, but love its Father; it delights in his Presence, it would be always with him, and would be always shewing Demonstrations of its Affection, by little endearing Fondnesses and Caresses; but especially it shews its Love, by a Desire to please, and Fear to offend its Father, by submitting and conforming its Will to his; and readily and immediately doing whatever it is bidden: Thus it gives its Heart, by giving up its Will to its Father.

3. Again, as it admires and loves its Father, so it trusts Him wholly with the Care and Provision for itself; both for the present and the future. It is entirely resigned to Him, to be fed and cloathed, to be guided and governed, to be instructed and corrected, as his Father pleases and sees fit; it wholly relies, and depends upon its Father for its future Inheritance, and for the preparing and cultivating his Mind, and making

it fit to possess and use it, so as to be an Honour to his Father, and an Ornament to his Family; and all this, without any other Care and Sollicitude, than that of shewing it self a loving, dutiful, and obedient Child.

To give our Heart to God then, according to this Model, is

1st. To give up our Understandings to Him, to think upon and contemplate, to admire and adore the infinite Beauties, Excellencies, and Perfections of the divine Nature; in all Humility and Simplicity implicitly to believe God's Revelations, and obey his Commands; to believe what he says, though we cannot comprehend it; and to obey what He commands, though we do not see the Reason of it; to reverence, esteem, and value Him infinitely, above and beyond all Things whatsoever; and to shew outwardly the inward Sense we have of his infinite Worth, by actually preferring at all Times, and in all Cases, His Pleasure to our Pleasure, His Will to our Will, His Glory to our Glory.

2^{dly}. To give our Heart to God, is in the properest Sense, to give our Free-will, our Love and Affection to Him.

To make the Will, Pleasure, and Glory of God the End of all our Words and Actions; of all our Thoughts, Desires, Designs and Intentions; to make it the ruling and governing Principle of our Lives, and the very End of our Being; to please God, to do his Will, and obey his Commands; to submit, resign, and conform our Wills to the Will of God in all Things; to make it the supreme, the strongest, and most ardent

ardent Desire of our Spirits, that our *heavenly Father's Name may be hallowed, his Kingdom come, and his Will be done*: To desire above all Things, that God may be loved, honoured, adored, and obeyed by us, and all intelligent Creatures, to the very utmost of our Powers and Capacities; to desire that God may reign, and govern absolutely in us; that the holy Spirit may *in all Things direct and rule our Hearts*; that God may animate our Souls, as our Souls animate our Bodies; that He may be the ^a Soul of our Soul, the Life of our Life, and the first Mover of all our Motions; and that God's Will may be done as punctually, as readily, as cheerfully by Men on Earth, as it is by the Angels in Heaven; to desire, acquiesce, and delight in the Will of God, whatever it be, purely as it is the Will of God, without any Regard to our selves, whether it be pleasing, or displeasing, gratifying, or crucifying to Nature; neither liking it a bit more for being pleasing, nor a bit less for being painful to us.

Again, to give our Heart, that is, our Love and Affection to God, is to delight in his Presence and Conversation, to live under a constant Sense of his Presence every where, and to delight in thinking upon Him, in conversing with and speaking to Him in our Hearts by Prayer, Adoration, and Praise; &c. it is to shew the proper Testimonies of our Love and Affection to Him, not only in Words, and tender Expressi-

^a Tu vera mea Vita, Deus meus. August. Confes. Lib. Dec. cap. 17. Vivit corpus meum de animâ mea, & vivit anima mea de te c. 20.

ons of Devotion, (though even these are not morosely and superciliously to be rejected and condemned, God having countenanced and authorised this Way of treating Him, in holy Scripture; the one half of the Book of *Canticles* being nothing else but the tender and passionate Expressions of a Soul enflamed with the Love of God) but much more should we labour to shew the Testimony of our Love to God in Deeds; in desiring and actually endeavouring to please Him, by obeying his Will, and keeping his Commandments; in fear to offend Him, and in ardent longing to enjoy him. It is to be so inwardly disposed, and intimately affected, as the holy *Psalmist* was; and to be able to say to God with Truth, from the Bottom of our Hearts, as he did; ^a *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is nothing upon Earth I desire in Comparison of Thee:* ^b *For Thou, O Lord God, art the Thing that I long for.*

³^{dly}, To give our Heart to God is to put our whole Trust and Confidence in Him; to give our selves wholly up to his infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, for Sanctification and Salvation; to endeavour to love, serve, and obey Him, to the utmost of our Power; and then to set our Hearts at rest, and securely trust Him with and depend upon him for Virtue, Purity, Sanctity, Perfection, and eternal Life; being infallibly certain, that he will order and dispose of us, and all our Concerns, both outwardly and inwardly, so as shall be for his greatest Glory, and our great-

^a *Psal. lxxiy. 25.*

^b *Psal. lxxi. 4.*

est Good; that our heavenly Father will take such Care of our Education, giving us from Time to Time such Instruction and Correction, in such Manner and Measure, as his infinite Wisdom and Love shall see most convenient to fit us for the great Expectations we were born to, in the spiritual Regeneration, being the *Children of GOD, and Heirs of the Kingdom of HEAVEN.*

But to make this Deed of Gift compleat, we must not only give our Hearts to God *fully*, that is, our selves, Souls, and Bodies, all that we have and are without Exception and Reserve; but we must also give them *freely* and *voluntarily, absolutely* and *irrevocably*.

We should give our Hearts to God *freely and voluntarily*; not so much out of Fear, or even Hope, as out of Love to our heavenly Father; not out of a slavish Fear and Dread of Punishment, nor out of a mercenary and selfish Hope of Gain, but out of *pure Love* to God, and to the infinitely transcendent Excellency, Beauty, and Loveliness of the divine Nature. This is the true Temper and Disposition, and the proper Character of the legitimate Children and genuine Sons of God: They have no other Motive for their Love, but Love it self; they love not out of Fear, or out of Hope, but out of Love; they love God for God's sake, not their own; they love Him, not for his Gifts, but for Himself, because He is altogether infinitely lovely, and therefore infinitely to be beloved; they therefore give their Hearts to Him alone, because He alone deserves them.

And

And if this Circumstance be wanting, we spoil the Gift, and make it hardly worth accepting; to give our selves without Love, is like offering a Sacrifice without an Heart. Love is the very Heart of the Heart, and a generous Disinterestedness is the very Heart and Essence of Love; and to give the Heart without this, is in Effect not to give it at all, but to keep it intirely to our selves; to love another only for our selves, is not to love the other, but our selves; nor if the Heart be offered upon these Terms can it be very acceptable; for how would it relish, if a Son should address himself thus to his Father?

“ Sir, I will ever shew my self a dutiful and
“ obedient Son to you, but I declare, it is not
“ out of Respect and Love to you, but to my
“ self; out of a Prospect of getting by you if
“ I be obedient, and for fear of being punished
“ and disinherited if I should be disobedient;
“ it is not you, but the Inheritance, that I value;
“ it is not you, but my self, that I love.

Does not every one see at first Glimpse, how shameful it is to use such Language to an earthly Parent? And is it less indecent to be used to our heavenly Father? Is there any Reason why such a tender of Duty and Obedience, such an Offer of an Heart, should be more acceptable to God, than it is to Man? And yet thus we in effect treat God, when we obey Him only upon the Motives of our Hopes or Fears; and though no Man speaks thus in Words, yet whoever avows and acts upon those Motives only, says so both in his Heart and in his Actions.

And

And yet notwithstanding all this, so superabundantly good and gracious is our heavenly Father, so excessively desirous of his Children's Happiness, that he seems to waive his Privilege and Prerogative for their Advantage, and to forego his own Honour for their Good; and to be willing to accept us, if we will but give our selves to Him, upon any Terms. He had rather it should be even out of Fear and Dread than not at all; and He will so accept them, that offer themselves to Him, out ^a of *Fear of his Judgments*, that if they will but give themselves up entirely to Him, He will lead them out of Fear into Hope, and from Hope to Love, and so *perfect* that in them by the *Spirit*, which was *begun* in the *Flesh*; but surely it would be more worthy of God, as well as more pleasing and acceptable to Him, if we gave our Hearts to Him from the very first, purely out of *Love* to Him.

Lastly, as we should give up our Hearts to God fully and freely, *i. e.* give up our whole selves, wholly to be disposed of by God as He pleases, for his Glory; so we should give our Hearts to Him *absolutely* and *irrevocably*, not give our selves one Minute, and take our selves back again the next, but we should give, and transfer the Property of our selves to God for ever. After we have once given our Hearts to God, we should never any more look upon our selves as our own, but as His; and therefore never use our selves, and dispose of our selves, think, act,

^a Psal. cxix. 120.

or speak, according to our own Will, but His; not for our own Pleasure, but His; not for our own, but His Glory: But we should evermore, and in all Things, suffer our selves to be ordered and disposed of, to be guided and governed by God, by his holy Will declared to us in his holy Word, and signified to us in the inward Direction of his holy Spirit, and in the outward Order of his Providence.

II. I proceed now in the second Place, to move and urge you to comply with the Request, by the strongest and most forcible Motives I am able; and they are these two,

1. That it is our most bounden Duty.

2. *Secondly*, That it is our highest Interest.

1. *First*, It is our most bounden Duty to give our Hearts to God; to which we are obliged,

1.) By *Justice*; because God only deserves them, and that in a double Respect; first, with Regard to what He is in Himself, and in his own Nature; and secondly, with Regard to his Relation to us.

2^{dly}.) By *Gratitude*.

3^{dly}.) By a Kind of *spiritual natural Affection*.

1.) We are bound to give our Hearts to God in Justice, because He alone deserves them, by Reason of the infinite Excellency and Perfection of the divine Nature.

Admiration and Love are the just and natural Tribute and Homage due to *Beauty* and Perfection: We cannot forbear paying this Debt to the Shadows of them we find in this mortal, miserable World; the very Appearance, the Images

images and Pictures of them charm and captivate our Hearts; for such meer empty Shadows are all the Beauties and Perfections we meet with in the Creatures here below. If then these languid Shades and Copies of Beauty and Loveliness have such an Effect upon us, how should the divinely bright and living Original affect us and transport us, and with a pleasing Violence take away and rob us of our Hearts?

All the united Charms and Beauties of the whole Creation, not only of this World below, but of all the Worlds above, of Men and Angels, of Heaven and Earth, are but as a Drop of Water to the Ocean, but as a Ray of Light to the Sun, in Comparison of the infinite Brightness and Splendor of the divine Beauty and Glory; in Comparison of the boundless and bottomless Abyss of the divine Excellencies and Perfections: And even those little Sparks of Beauty, and Drops of Excellency, that are observable in the Creatures, are not their own; they are borrowed, and flow from, and intirely depend upon, the Ocean of the divine Beauties and Perfections. All that is so admirable, so lovely and delightful, that so captivates and transports us here below, owes all its Sweetness and attractive Charms to the supream original Beauty above.

Now if Justice requires and binds us to give to every one his Due, surely we ought to give our Hearts to God intirely without Reserve; for what challenges our Admiration so much as infinite Knowledge and infinite Wisdom? What demands our Reverence and Adoration like infinite

finite Power and infinite Majesty? What requires our Affections, what commands our Love, what deserves our Heart, so much as infinite Beauty joined with infinite Love, infinite Perfection, and infinite Charms, joined with infinite Kindness and Goodness? Such a Goodness, as desires, and delights in nothing more, than in giving and communicating it self, and the Possession and Enjoyment of its Beauty, Happiness, and Glory, to its Lovers. For from whom should we expect *Good*, but from infinite *Goodness*? From whom should we expect to have our Nature *repaired*, but from that *infinite Power* that first created it? By whom should we expect to be *reformed*, but by those *omnipotent* Hands that at first *made and fashioned us*? Whom should we *trust*, absolutely and entirely, with the Disposal of our selves and all that belongs to us, but *infinite Wisdom*?

Surely such a Being ought to possess our Hearts without a Competitor, and reign without a Rival.

Would it not be the supream Desire of our Souls, unless we were spiritually blind, stupid and insensible, to have our Hearts and Thoughts perpetually engaged and employed about Him? ought He not perpetually to attract the Eyes of our Mind, as outward Beauty does those of the Body? And should we not desire to spend the whole of our Duration and Existence, not only the short Moment of this Life, but a whole *Eternity*, in contemplating, in gazing, and looking upon those ravishing Charms and Beauties of the divine Nature; whose View and Sight does
not

not only fill the happy Beholders with perpetual Raptures and Extasies of Wonder and Delight, but communicates to them those very Excellencies they behold; ^a transforms them into the Image and Likeness of Him they behold, and makes them all glorious, happy, and divine? *Whom have we in Heaven but Him, and what is there upon Earth that we should desire in Comparison of Him?* Now is it not the highest Injury to God, to expect greater Happiness from this evil World, than from infinite Goodness? To rely more upon our own Industry, and Activity in acquiring Virtue and Holiness, than upon the divine Operation; that is, to rely more upon the Weakness of Man, than the Power of God? and to trust our own Judgment more to choose and order what is best for us, to direct, guide and govern us; that is, to trust our own Ignorance and Folly, more than infinite Wisdom?

And are we not guilty of the highest Injustice, do we not put the greatest Slight, and the highest Affront, upon the divine Majesty, when we prefer any Creature before the Creator? What should we think of the Son of a King, who should have so depraved a Taste of Pleasure, as to prefer the raking in a Dunghill, the catching, killing, and feeding upon Vermin, before the honourable Delight of his Father's Presence and Conversation? Are we not every one of us guilty of an infinitely more unjust Preference, when we, who are the *Children of God*, and the Offspring of Heaven, set our Hearts and Affec-

^a 1 John iii. 2.

tions upon any of the Objects of this corruptible miserable World, which *St. Paul* says are all ^a *Dross and Dung*, to the Prejudice of the Love and Duty we owe to our heavenly Father? Can any thing be more outrageously injurious to the divine Honour, than to prefer the Riches, the ^b *thick Clay, the Dross* of this World, to the *Treasure in Heaven, the Kingdom of God*; to prefer the Pleasures, the filthy beastly Pleasures, the *Dung* of this World, to the pure, chaste, spiritual, and divine Delights of Heaven; to prefer the ^c *Friendship of this World, which is Enmity with God*, to the Friendship and Love of God?

And do we not prefer these Things to God, when we give our Hearts to them, when we place our Love and Affections upon them, when we desire them, long after them, pursue them, rejoyce, and delight in them, with all the Powers of our Souls, as if they were our *Summum Bonum*, the very End we were created for, our sovereign Good, our God? And when we thus rob God of our Hearts, to give them to the Things of this World, is it not in Effect to say, that they are more valuable and excellent, more beautiful and amiable, more desirable than God; that they deserve Esteem and Love more than God does, and are able to make us happier than God can make us; and therefore, that these are the Gods we will worship, serve, and love with all our Heart, with all our Mind, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength? and to whom

^a Phil. iii. 8.

^b Habak. ii. 6.

^c James iv. 4.

we will sacrifice all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls and Bodies?

Hence it is undoubtedly that in Scripture, they who *set their Affections upon Things below*, are represented as paying that inward Homage and Adoration to Creatures, which is due to God alone; they are said to ^a *love them*, to ^b *hope*, to ^c *trust* in them, ^b *to make them their Confidence*; and in Consequence of this, are said expressly to be guilty of ^d *Idolatry*; which is the highest Injustice, Injury, and Affront that can be done to, or put upon, the divine Nature.

^a 2 Tim. iii. 4.

^b Job xxxi. 24.

^c Mat. x. 24.

1 Tim. vi. 17.

^d Coloss. iii. 5. Rom. xvi. 18. Phil. iii. 19.





SERMON II.



PROV. XXIII. 26.

My Son, give me thine Heart.



THESE Words are a Request from God to Man, in discoursing upon which I proposed to do these two Things.

I. To shew you the Meaning of the Request, and what it is to give our Heart to God.

II. To move and urge you to comply with the Request, by the strongest and most forcible Motives.

The first of these I considered in a former Discourse, and am now upon the

II^d. Which was to urge upon you proper Motives to comply with the Request in the Text.

These I reduced to these two.

1. That it is our most bounden Duty.

2. That it is our highest Happiness.

1. That it is our most bounden Duty to give our Hearts to God, I attempted to shew from these three Particulars.

1.) That we are obliged in *Justice* to give our Hearts to God, because God alone deserves them, and that in a double Respect; first, with Regard to what He is in Himself, and in his own Nature; and secondly, with Regard to his Relation to us.

2.) That we are obliged to it by *Gratitude*.

3.) That we are obliged to it by a Kind of *spiritual natural Affection*.

The first of these I have also considered, *viz.* the Obligation that lies upon us in Justice to give our Hearts to God, as He alone deserves them, with Regard to what He is in Himself, and in his own Nature. I go on now,

2^{dly}, To shew that we are bound in Justice to give our Hearts to God, as He alone deserves them, with Regard to his Relation to us, *viz.* as He is our Creator and Redeemer.

We belong to God, and are his by the highest and most indisputable Right and Title; He created us and made us, He ^a *formed and fashioned us*; we are the Contrivance and Invention of his Mind, and the Workmanship of his Hands. He brought us out of nothing into Being, and all

^a Job x. 8. Psal. cxix. 73.

that we are and have is from Him, is owing to Him, and is His. Nothing gives so supreme and absolute a Dominion, as Creation. ^a The Potter, though he can make what Sort of Vessel he thinks fit, and can break it when he has done, if it does not please him; yet has not so much Power over his Clay, nor such Authority over the Work of his Hands, as the Creator has over the Creature.

As He had an absolute Power before they were made, either to make them, or not to make them; so after they are made, He has an absolute Authority to order, and govern, and dispose of them as he pleases; and as He made all Things for his Glory, He has a Right to make all Things serve to his Glory.

Now are we not bound by the highest Justice to give our selves up to Him, to whom we do of Right belong, and freely and voluntarily to become his Servants, whose Creatures we are; and to give our Hearts to Him who made them, and made them for Himself?

Is it not the highest Injustice, nay, the highest Sacrilege to rob God? and to rob Him, not of a consecrated Thing stolen out of a Temple, but of the very Temple itself; and that not a material Temple made with Hands, but a spiritual and living Temple, built by and for Himself? to desecrate and profane this Temple, by setting up our Idols in our Heart, in the Place and Throne of God; and by sacrificing to them all our Love and Affection, and all the Powers of our Soul

^a Jer. xviii. 6.

and Body, which ought to be offered to God alone?

Is it not the highest Injustice to refuse and deny God his own, and to give that to another which belongs to Him, not only as Possessor, but Creator? Do not we account it a great Injury, when any Servant that is bound to serve us, runs away from us, and gives himself up to another Master? Do not Parents think it an Invasion of their Authority, and a Violation of the Love, Duty, and Obedience that is due to them, when their Children dispose of themselves without their Consent, and give themselves contrary to their Will and Command, either to Persons or Things which they know will be their Ruin? And has not our Lord and Master, our heavenly Father, an infinitely higher Right and Authority to dispose of us, than Masters and Parents have over their Servants and Children? Thus the Scripture represents God, as expostulating with those who have set their Hearts and Affections upon, and given themselves up to, the World. *A Son honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Master: If then I be a Father, where is my Honour? and if I be a Master, where is my Fear?* Mal. i. 6.

And indeed, nothing is represented as greater Matter of Wonder and Surprize, than for the Thing formed to run counter to Him that formed it^a, or the Instrument to act contrary to the Direction of him that uses it^b.

Again, we are not only bound in Justice to give our Hearts to God as our Creator, but also as our Redeemer.

^a Rom. ix. 26.

^b Isaiah x. 15.

When Man had deserted and run away from the Service of his rightful Lord and Master, and sold himself for a Slave to his grand Enemy, the original Traytor, Tyrant and Usurper ; that is, when Man by disobeying the Commands of God, and by obeying the Will of the Devil, had put himself in the Power of the Devil : It pleased the infinite Goodness of God to redeem Man from this miserable Bondage and Slavery, and to pay a most inestimable Price for his Ransom ; * *God purchased the Possession of Mankind, as the Scripture expressly declares, with his own Blood.*

Are we not bound then to give God his own ? Is it not the highest Injury to rob Him of, and detain him from those Hearts, that Love, Affection, Duty and Obedience, which he bought, and the Purchase of which cost him his Life ? For in Effect to give our Heart away, to give our selves up to the World, to the Honours, Riches, and Pleasures of it under such Circumstances, is not barely to be guilty of Injustice towards the Son of God, but to be guilty of his Death ; for he that robs him of that which cost him his Life, robs him of his Life ; he that robs him of that for which he shed his Blood, robs him of his Blood : As he that robs a Man of a Thing that cost him a thousand Pounds, really robs him of a thousand Pounds.

We cause the Blood of the Son of God, as to us, to be spilt in vain, we take away his Life and give him nothing for it : Whereas, so transcendent is his Love and Goodness, would we but

* Acts xx. 28.

in return give our Hearts to Him, give our selves wholly up to love and serve Him; He would think his Life well bestowed, and the Price of his Blood well laid out; and moreover, give us his own Heart in exchange for ours, which reminds me of the second Obligation we lye under, to give our Hearts to God, *viz.* that of *Gratitude*.

All the Good, the Kindnesses, and Benefits that are done to us, do in the very Nature of Things require us, and lay an indispensible Obligation upon us, to make some kind of Return; they are called, and are Obligations, *i.e.* Debts, and ought in Justice some way or other to be repayed: And this is a Notion so natural to Mankind, and the Sense of it so deeply imprinted on their Minds, that whoever acts contrary to it is accounted unnatural, and seems a Monster to the rest of the Species.

If the Kindness be done by an Equal, it requires at least an Equivalent; if by an Inferior, it requires a Return of greater Value: But if our Benefactor be so much our Superior as to need no Return, and the Favours he confers upon us so great, as to exceed our Power of making a suitable one; yet something we ought to do, to shew our Gratitude for his Obligations. And if there be any little Thing we have, which he seems to have a liking to, and expresses his Value for, especially, if he condescends to ask it of us, the least we can do is chearfully and thankfully to offer such a Trifle in return for so many and great Favours: And he that should refuse

to do this, would justly be accounted the most brutish of all human Race.

How much more horrid Monsters of Ingratitude then are we, if we refuse to give our Hearts to God? to God who made us, who preserves us, who died for us, in order to sanctify and glorify us! is not this the supreme Benefactor, who ^a *gives to all Life, and Breath, and all Things?* did he not make all Things for us, and us for Himself? ^b *Does he not give us all Things richly to enjoy?* did he not first give us to our selves, and then give all Things to us, and after this give Himself for us, that at last He might give Himself to us? Did he not give us this Body of ours, ^c *which is so wonderfully made,* and set the celestial Jewel of our living and immortal Soul within it? and does he not still ^d *hold our Soul in Life,* and continually preserve us? and should we not without the Support of his omnipotent Hand sink into our primitive nothing, and vanish out of Being? Are not all the Comforts and Conveniencies of this Life, the Profusion of that bountiful Hand which ^e *opens it self, and fills all Things living with Plenteousness?* and besides all the Benefits he has actually conferred upon us in this Life, has he not prepared an Eternity of unknown Happiness and Glory for us in the Life to come? Are we not also obliged to Him for the Means of Grace, as well as the Hope of Glory? Did he not shed his

^a Acts xvii. 25.

^d Psal. lvi. 9.

^b 1 Tim. vi. 17.

^e Psal. cxlv. 16. *Old Translation.*

^c Psal. cxxxix. 14.

Blood,



Blood, even to the very last Drop, for the Atonement of our Sins, and to reconcile us to Himself? and does he not continually offer us his holy Spirit to purify and sanctify our Souls, and make them fit for the eternal Enjoyment of Himself? Does He not continually give us Opportunities of drawing near to him in his holy Ordinances here, to prepare us for being most closely and intimately united to him for ever hereafter?

And shall we receive all, our Being, Life, Souls, Bodies, Spirits, and all their Powers and Faculties, all that we are, have, can do, or enjoy; shall we, I say, receive all, and return nothing? Shall we never think and say with the Royal Psalmist, *^a Quid retribuam? What shall I render unto the Lord for all the Benefits that He hath done unto me?*

And though God is so infinitely self-sufficient, that he stands in need of nothing else, and all that we can give him is nothing to him; so infinitely high, that *^b all our Goods cannot extend unto him*; so infinitely glorious and happy in himself, that he can receive no Addition by all that all his Creatures put together can render or give unto him; and his Benefits to us so many and infinitely great, that our Beings, and all that we are and have, are infinitely short of a sufficient Return: Yet Gratitude will not suffer us to think our selves discharged of all Obligation; because we are not able to pay the whole Debt. No, if there be any Thing of all that we have recei-

^a Psal. cxvi. 12.

^b Psal. xvi. 2.

ved, of all that we have or are, that our great Benefactor seems to have a liking to, and Inclination for, surely we shall willingly present him with that.

But this he has not left us to guess at; he has not given us to understand, by Innuendos and Insinuations, what he has a Mind we should give him, though even that had been sufficient to have made a grateful Mind readily offer it; but he has expressly declared what he likes, and what he would have us give him in return, nay, and has condescended so far as to ask it of us, saying, *My Son, give me thy Heart.*

Now if we deny so small a Request to so great a Person; if we refuse so small a Return to so great a Benefactor; if we will not give our Heart, Love, Affection, and Duty to God our Maker, Preserver, Redeemer and Sanctifier; but will give up our selves to the vain and empty, the sordid, beastly, and sinful Enjoyments of this wicked World, and so love and serve the Creature more than the Creator; we shall shew our selves the greatest Monsters of Ingratitude in the whole Creation. We shall be more brutish than the very Beasts; *for the Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib.* Nay, we shall be more horribly ungrateful than the very Devils themselves, for whom God has not done so much as for Mankind; of whom, though he is the Creator, yet he is not the Redeemer; though he gave them all they once enjoyed, yet he did not give himself for

Isaiah i. 3.

them;

them; he did not bleed, he did not dye for them, as he did for Mankind: So that if we will not give our Hearts to God, we are unthankful for greater Mercies, and consequently more ungrateful than the very Devils.

3.) We are bound to give our Hearts to God by a Kind of *spiritual natural Affection*.

For God is not only our Creator, but our *Father*, and we are not only the Workmanship of his Hands, but the ^a *Offspring* of his Bowels. Our immortal Spirits are of divine Extraction, and are the ^b *Sons of God*.

Now the mutual and reciprocal Affection between Parents and Children, is so universally, so deeply and strongly impressed upon human Nature by the Author of Nature, that whoever wants it seems a Monster, not a Man, and a Creature of another Species; this natural Affection, I say, is but a Picture and Image of that Love that ought to be, by Nature, between Beings of a spiritual and intellectual Nature, between our Spirits and the Father of our Spirits.

For which Reason it is, that in Scripture God is pleased to represent the Love he bears to Men under the Image of that natural Love and Affection which Parents bear toward their Children; and to point out to us the Return he expects from us, under the Figure of that Love and Duty that Children should naturally bear towards their Parents. Thus *Jer. xxxi. 9. I am a Father to Israel: And like as a Father pitieth*

^a Acts xvii. 28, 29.

^b Luke iii. 38. 1 John iii. 2.

*his own Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, Psal. ciii. 13. And again, I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty, 2 Cor. vi. 18. This also is the Foundation and Reason of the ^aParable of the Prodigal, in which our Lord describes the Nature of Sin under the Notion of a Violation and Breach of that Love, Affection, and Duty that a Son ought to bear and pay to his Father; and the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God, in receiving returning and repenting Sinners, under the Figure of the Tenderness and Love of an indulgent Father to a beloved Son. Our blessed Lord has also signified to us, that the properest Disposition to draw near and approach unto God, and to have Communication and Conversation with him by Prayer, is to have our Hearts affected, and to address our selves to him with the dutiful and reverential Love and Affection of Sons, when he taught and authorised us to think and call God, *our Father*.*

And indeed this *spiritual natural Affection* ought to be in proportion so much stronger than the carnal natural Affection, as the Soul is a more noble Being than the Body, and as God is greater than Man.

And this Truth is also thus represented to us in Scripture, where God declares that his Love to Mankind exceeds the Tenderness of Mothers towards the new-born Offspring of their Womb.

Isa. xlix. 15. Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? Yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee. And to make us still more sensible how deeply the Love of Mankind is imprinted in the divine Nature, he adds, *Behold I have engraven thee upon the Palms of my Hands.* And no doubt our reciprocal Love ought to be proportionable; for which Reason *St. Paul*, from the Duty and Submission we pay to our natural Parents, argues *a fortiori*, that we ought to pay much greater to our heavenly Father: If we love and honour the Fathers of our Flesh so much, how much more should we love and honour the Father of Spirits? *Heb. xii. 9.* And the contrary Behaviour is so astonishingly unnatural, that in Scripture God is pleased to condescend so far, as to call Heaven and Earth to witness his Surprize, saying, *Isa. i. 2. Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me!*

The Thought that God is our Father ought, whenever it strikes our Mind, to move the very Bowels of our Spirits; to touch the tenderest Strings of our Heart; to fill us with a lively Sense of the Relation, and make us overflow with Expressions and Acts of Love, Duty, and Obedience; make us pour out our Hearts before him, and give our Hearts to him: Especially, when we consider him not only as our Father, but the best of Fathers, who desires and delights in

in doing good to his Children, and who solicits us to give our Hearts to him, not for his Advantage but our own; that He may do with them what we cannot do our selves, *viz.* purify and sanctify them, in order to glorify them and make them eternally happy, which naturally leads me to the

II^d. Great Motive that I proposed to urge, in order to move you to comply with the Request in the Text, and to give your Hearts to God, *viz.* that it is our highest Interest, which I hope will appear evidently, when I have shewn that

- 1.) Our Holiness, and
- 2.) Our Happiness depends upon it.
- 1.) Our Holiness depends upon our giving our Heart to God.

All solid and substantial Virtue, all real and true Holiness, must flow from the Fountain of Holiness the holy Ghost; and be communicated, infused and wrought into the Spirits of Men by the Spirit of God. The Virtues that are acquired by meer Speculation (if any such there be) I doubt are only in Speculation, are but the Shadows and Appearances of Virtue, are like their parent Ideas, nothing but Images, are but in Theory not in Practice, are but in Picture not in Life. They, like the Edifice of the foolish Builder in the Gospel, founded upon the Sand, are built upon the sandy, weak, and unstable Foundation of Man's Power, and therefore cannot stand the violent Assault and Shock of a strong Temptation; for ^a *except the Lord build*

^a Psal. cxxvii. 1.

the House, their Labour is but lost that build it.

But the Virtue that is communicated from the holy Spirit partakes of the divine Qualities of its Original, is Power and Life; and is founded upon ^a *a Rock, the Rock of Ages*; and partakes of the Firmness and Immutability of its Foundation, and therefore stands firm and unmoved, against the utmost Efforts of all the Storms and Tempests that discharge their Rage and Fury upon it. Witness the Lives and Deaths of the Saints recorded in holy Writ, and in the Monuments of primitive Christianity.

For according to Dr. *H. More*, and indeed according to Truth, Virtue is *Vis Animæ*, a Power of the Soul, a vital operative Power, which exerts it self in Action upon all proper Occasions.

Now as the viewing a beautiful fine Picture, Statue, or Building, may indeed give us the Desire, but cannot give us the Power of making the like; for that we must apply our selves to proper Persons, who can infuse into us the Skill, that is, the intellectual Power of producing such Effects: Just so the viewing with the Eyes of our Mind, and contemplating the Ideas and Images of the Virtues, may raise and excite in us a Desire after them, and that is the proper Effect of such Speculation, and a very good one too; yet though it may give us the Desire, it cannot give us the Power of acting conformably to our Notions. But this it may and ought to do, *viz.* put us upon having recourse, and applying our selves to the great Master of Holiness, and

* Isaiah xxvi. 4.

Teacher of Righteousness, the omnipotent and holy Spirit of God; ^a *without whom we can do nothing*; ^b *and through whose Strength we can do all Things*; and make us use our utmost Endeavours to engage him to ^c *teach us to do the Thing that pleaseth him*; ^d *to put his Laws in our Hearts, and write them in our inward Parts*; ^e *to work in us that which is well pleasing in his Sight*; to ^f *work in us both to will and to do*.

Now the only Way effectually to engage the holy Spirit to work in us, and communicate to us true Holiness and Virtue, is to give up our Hearts to Him, that he may do with us and in us what he pleases, when he pleases, as he pleases, for his Glory.

For God has given Free-will so in Property to Man, that he will never force it, and work upon it without his Consent, and whether he will or no; Therefore the surest and most effectual Way to engage God to work in us, is to give up our Free-will entirely to God, that he may form and fashion it, may guide, govern, and direct it in all Things according to his own Will. And in acting thus we certainly do what is most agreeable to him, and advantageous to our selves: There can be no surer Way of attaining true Holiness, than to engage God to concern himself in the Affair, and to work in us, with us, and for us; and we cannot more effectually engage him, than by resigning up our Free-will to him: Not only because that is the only Thing that opposes

^a John xv. 5.
Translation.

^b Phil. iv. 13.

^d Jer. xxxi. 33.

^c Psal. clxiii. 10. *Old*

^e Heb. xiii. 21.

^f Phil. ii. 14.

and resists him; and consequently if this Resistance of our Self-will were taken out of the Way, he would reign absolutely in our Hearts, and direct, govern, and sanctify them according to his good Pleasure: But also, because this devoting of our Hearts to him, is of all others the Sacrifice that gains his Heart the most, and without which all others are of no Value with him. He cannot but apply himself with a particular Care to the Sanctification of a Heart that is wholly given up to him; is entirely his, and trusts him wholly with it self.

And in truth we shall find upon Examination, that the three great Conditions required by the Scripture, for obtaining the Inhabitation of the holy Spirit in our Souls, which are ^a *Humility*, ^b *Purity of Heart*, and ^c *Prayer*, are all included and contained in giving our Heart to God.

For the giving our Heart to God is nothing else but another Expression for CHARITY, or the LOVE of God; and of this divine Grace Humility, Purity of Heart, and Prayer, are the necessary Effects and inseparable Attendants. Love begets Humility, as it makes us think nothing of our selves, pass by and neglect our selves, and give our selves away from our selves, to the Use and Service, the Will and Pleasure, of the Beloved: It is the Parent of Purity of Heart, as it purifies our Desires and Intentions from all Self-Interest, and makes us in all our Thoughts,

^a Isaiah lvii. 15. Jam. iv. 6. ¹ Pet. v. 5. Prov. iii. 34.
^b Jam. iv. 8. Isaiah liii. 2. ² Cor. vi. 17. ^c Luke ii. 13.

Words and Works seek only God's Honour and Glory, desire to please him, not our selves, and to do his Will, not our own; it is also the Fountain and Source of continual Prayer, it being impossible to love God, and not have a constant Inclination and perpetual Tendency to think of him, to converse with him, and speak to him, Thought to Thought, Heart to Heart, and Spirit to Spirit; and not to feel an unspeakable Pleasure and Delight in this heavenly Inter-course and Communication; which leads me naturally to the

2.) Great Motive for giving our Hearts to God; which is, that our Happiness depends upon it, our present as well as our eternal Happiness: for if we would be happy in another World, the Foundation of it must be laid in this; the Life of Grace being the Beginning of the Life of Glory, as the Life of Glory is the Consummation and Perfection of the Life of Grace. The Happiness of this Life compared with that of the next, bears the same Relation and Proportion to it as an Embryo does to a Man; it is the Seed and first Principle of Life: Upon which Analogy many of our blessed Saviour's Parables are founded, particularly that wherein he compares the Kingdom of God to a Grain of Mustard Seed, *Matth. xiii. 31*. So that the Seed of eternal Life must be sown in our Hearts here, if we expect a full Harvest of Glory and Happiness hereafter.

Now it is plain from Scripture, that Holiness is absolutely and indispensibly necessary to our
Happi-

Happiness; for it is expressly said, that ^a *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*; and ^b *blest, or happy, are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God*; and I have proved to you just now, that Holiness or Sanctification is the Work of God in the Soul of Man, and that it is necessary to give our Hearts to God, in order to engage the holy Spirit to work in us, and communicate his Holiness to us.

And as it is plain from divine Revelation that our Happiness depends upon giving our Hearts to God, so it is evident likewise both from Experience, and from Reason and the Nature of the Thing.

It is evident from Experience and Fact, that from the Beginning of the World to this Day, all those who have given their Hearts up to the Creatures, have placed their Love, and set their Affections upon the Riches, Honours, or Pleasures of the World, and have had the greatest Measure of the Possession and Enjoyment of them, have not for all that been happy, but miserable. They that have arrived at the Height of human Grandeur and Glory, and have had the World at Command, and enjoyed as much of it as human Nature is capable of, yet have not been satisfied, nor contented; ^c *in the midst of Laughter their Heart has been sorrowful*; ^d *in their Sufficiency they have been in Straits*; in the midst of Plenty they have been in Want; still pursuing what they have not, and tired of what they have; still inventing and projecting Schemes

^a Heb. xii. 14. ^b Matth. v. 8. ^c Prov. xiv. 13. ^d Job xx. 22.

for a Succession of new Pleasures, to supply the Place of the old ones that are worn out; and when they come to the Enjoyment of these, still they are not satisfied, but are looking out and purveying for more; *for the Eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the Ear with hearing.* All worldly Pleasures are like Salt-water, which instead of extinguishing, enflame the Thirst; they heighten, but cannot satisfy our Appetites. Whereas on the contrary they, who have given their Hearts and themselves wholly up to God, have been blessed with such a Fund of divine Tranquillity and Peace, of Satisfaction and Joy, as has made them more content in the utmost Poverty and Destitution, than others in the greatest Riches and Abundance; more happy in the sharpest Pains, than others in the highest Pleasures; who would not be bribed to change their Dungeons for Princes Palaces, nor their Scaffolds for the Thrones of Kings, if they were to change their inward Happiness with their outward Circumstances.

The Reason of all which is this. That as God made our immortal Spirits, so he made them for himself; and as he made them for himself, so he fitted them with Capacities for the Enjoyment of himself; the Understanding to know him, the Desire to tend to him and long for him, the Will to love him, the Memory to keep him always in our Mind.

Our Spirits were made for God and the Enjoyment of spiritual and divine Things, as our Bo-

dies were made for this World and material and corporeal Objects. And as the Eye was made to see, and the Ear to hear, and the Palate to taste, so our Understanding was made to view and contemplate, and be eternally feasted with the Charms of divine Beauty; our Will to love, to taste, and feed upon the true Nectar and Ambrosia of the divine Sweetness and Goodness; the Desire to stimulate us to know still more and more of the divine Nature and Perfections, to taste more of his Sweetness, to love him more, and experience more of his Love, and then to be immediately filled and satisfied with these new Degrees of Knowledge and Love, and then to desire more; and so to go round in an endless and infinite Circle of Desire and Fruition; the Desire heightning the Fruition, and the Fruition heightning the Desire to all Eternity.

Now as in our bodily Faculties, you can never please and satisfy any of the Senses, unless it enjoy and be filled with its proper Object, tho' you give it all the Abundance in the World of other Things; the Eye is not pleased with the most ravishing Harmony, nor the Ear with the most charming Beauty; but the Eye must be filled with Beauty, and the Ear with Harmony, if you would have each Sense feasted: So our divine Spirits which are made for the Enjoyment of divine and spiritual Objects, can never be filled, satisfied, and contented with material and corporeal ones, though it were possible for them to possess and enjoy the whole World, and all the Pleasures of it: And to hope for Happiness from these, would be like expecting to satisfy the Cra-

vings of an hungry Stomach with the Sight of Meat, and to quench a violent Thirst with the Noise of Water-falls. Because as St. *Augustin* says to God, *“Fecisti nos ad te, & inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te”*; Thou madest our Souls for thee, and our Hearts will never be at Rest, till they rest in thee.

But, to pursue the Comparison one Step farther; as, in order to delight any one of the bodily Senses, you must not only give it the natural and proper Object, but you must also give that Faculty up to that Object; you must give your Eye to be filled with the Light, and your Ear with Harmony: So, if you would have your Heart and Soul made solidly and substantially happy, you must give your Heart and Soul to God the Fountain of Happiness, that he may fill it with himself.

And whoever will try the Experiment and give up his Heart, Love and Affections wholly to God, and live only to him and for him, and give himself up to converse with him frequently in his Heart by Prayer, will in a little Time feel such a lively Sense and Impression of God, wrought by God upon his Spirit; will be so charmed with the View and Knowledge, which God will give him of his divine Beauties and Perfections, of his infinite Self-sufficiency, Knowledge, Wisdom, Power, Majesty and Glory; will be so pleased with the *Taste* of the divine Sweetness and Goodness; will find such a Desire and Delight in loving God, and being beloved

Confes. Lib. 1. Cap. 1.

by

by

by him, that all the Pleasures of Sense will appear languid and insipid to him; for *gustato spiritu, desipit omnis caro*. When once we come to taste and be acquainted with spiritual Pleasure, it is of so high, quick and poignant a Nature, that it spoils the Relish of all carnal Pleasures; they become as tasteless and flat as cold Water to those who have been used to the most generous and spirituous Cordials.

He will also find such a Fund of Comfort and Consolation, in the Sense of God's Mercy, in the Pardon of his Sins through the Blood of Christ; and of ^a *being accepted through the Beloved*; such a Peace as the World can neither give nor take away; such a divine Satisfaction and Delight in pleasing God and doing his Will, and serving to his Glory, and in the Sense of his Favour and loving Kindness to him, as will make him easy in Pain, and happy in Spite of Torments. He will feel such a Joy springing up in him, from the stedfast Hope of seeing God clearly, and enjoying him fully in Heaven, as will blunt all Sense of Sorrow; ^b *a Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*.

And when we come to finish and complete in the next World what was begun in this; when we go to, and arrive at that God to whom we have given our Hearts; when we clearly see him whom we have believed, and see those Charms of divine Beauty naked and unveiled, which mortal Eye could not bear, and therefore could only discover here through a Glass darkly;

^a Eph. i. 6.

^b 1 Pet. i. 8.

when we come to possess and enjoy to the full that infinite Goodness which we have loved, and hoped in, and longed for, and but just tasted of here: Then, O then, we shall be happy indeed; we shall be happy with the very Happiness of God himself. We shall be like a Drop of Water fallen into the Sea, which though it retain its own Nature and Existence, and can at any Time be separated from it by the Knowledge and Power of God; yet is so united to it and one with it, as to partake of the Nature and Qualities, the Actions and Movements, the Riches and Immensity of the Ocean. Thus closely will our Spirits be united with the supream Spirit, and we shall be *transformed* into and made *Partakers of the divine Nature* and Happiness to all Eternity.

Seeing then, my Brethren, these Things are so, let us instantly give our Hearts to God: We are now going to receive our Lord into our Mouths, O let us take him into our Hearts! Let us give our Hearts to him, that gave himself for us, and now offers to give himself to us. There, at his holy Altar, let us offer up and present our selves, our Souls and Bodies, *a reasonable, holy and lively Sacrifice unto him*. There let us make him such a Resignation and Transfer, so full and absolute a Deed of Gift, of our selves and all that belongs to us, as to reserve no selfish Use of our selves to our selves; and so irrevocable as to renounce for ever all Right, and all Desire of taking our selves again: and from that Moment let us no

more look upon our selves as our own, but as God's, not only by right of Creation and Purchase, but also by our own free Gift and Donation; and from henceforth, let us never use our selves or any of our Powers and Faculties for our selves, that is, for our own selfish Ends, but for him, for his Pleasure and Glory to whom we have given our selves and do belong. Let us never use our Free-will but in Submission to the Order of God, and in Dependence upon the divine Movements and Directions of the holy Spirit; and let us give up and abandon our selves to his wise, gracious, and loving Conduct and Guidance, so as that he may reign absolutely over us, and that we may no longer live to our selves, but to God alone; that so he may purify and sanctify our Hearts, *by the Inspiration of his holy Spirit*; that he may grant us his Peace here, and bring us to his everlasting Joy and Happiness hereafter, through the Merits of his adorable Son: *To whom, &c.*





SERMON III.

Conformity of the Will of Man
to the Will of God, the only
true Religion.

H E B. X. 6, 7, 8, 9.

*In Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices for Sin,
thou hast had no Pleasure.*

*Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the ^a Vo-
lume of the Book, it is written of me) to
do thy Will, O God.*

*Above, when he said, Sacrifice, and
Offering, and Burnt-offerings, and Of-
ferings for Sin, thou wouldest not, nei-*

^a ἐν κεφαλῇ, in the Beginning, or at the Head of the Book.

ther hadst Pleasure therein (which are offered by the Law;)

Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy Will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.



HE generality of the *Jews* doated on their ceremonial Law, even to Superstition; and rather idolized their Way of Worship, than honoured God by it. They thought themselves purified, sanctified, justified, and entitled to eternal Life, by their Observation of it. *St. Paul*, the Author of this Epistle to the *Jews* or *Hebrews*, according to the Wisdom given unto him, with divine Art and Address turns their Prejudices for *Judaism*, to the Advantage of Christianity; and makes use of their Fondness and Affection for the Law of *Moses*, as a Motive to work upon and incline them to embrace and hold fast the Gospel of Christ.

He shews that whatever Reasons they had for their Devotion to the Law, they held much stronger for their being more devoted to the Gospel; because the Gospel was not so much the Destruction, as the Completion and Consummation of the Law; it was the Law refined and spiritualized, in a better Form and higher State. All that the Law had, the Gospel also had, but in greater Excellency, and in Perfection. The Law was to the Gospel as a *Shadow*^a to a solid Substance; as the Out-Lines of a Picture, to a Sta-

^a Heb. viii. 5. —X. 1.

tue in full Proportion and to the Life. That the Christians had their *Lawgiver*, their *High-Priest*, their *Sanctuary*, their *Sacrifices*, their *Sabbath* or Rest, as well as the *Jews*, but in a more noble and divine Manner. That instead of *Moses* ^a *the Servant*, Christians had Christ the SON of God; that instead of a ^b *worldly Sanctuary made with Hands*, they had one ^c *made without Hands, the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not Man*, ^d *eternal in the Heavens*; instead of their ^e *mortal Priests*, and ^f *changeable Priesthood*, they had an ^g *immortal High-Priest*, who had an *eternal and unchangeable Priesthood*; that instead of their *external and carnal Sabbath*, and Rest from bodily Labour, they had an ^h *inward and spiritual one*, a ceasing from the Works of Sin, a Rest and Quiet from the Lashes and Stings of Remorse and a guilty Conscience; an inward Rest, notwithstanding all outward Troubles and Labours, in the Will of God at present, and in Hope and Expectation of a more perfect and glorious ⁱ *Sabbatism* and Rest hereafter, an eternal Rest from Sin and Misery, in perfect Purity, and everlasting Happiness and Glory: That instead of the ^k *Blood of Bulls and Goats*, they had the *Blood of the Son of God* to expiate their Sins; that instead of worshipping God by the Sacrifices of Beasts, here the Worshipers offered up themselves a Sacrifice, ^l *a living Sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God*;

^a Heb. iii. 5, 6.

^b Heb. ix. 1.

^c Heb. ix. 2, 24.

^d Heb.

viii. 2.

^e 2 Cor. v. 1.

^f Heb. vii. 23, 24.

^g Heb. viii. 1.

^h 1 Pet. iv. 1.

ⁱ Heb. ix. 10.

^k Heb. ix. 12.

^l Rom. xii. 1.

^l Rom. xii. 1.

they

they continually sacrificed their own Will to the divine Will in all Things. That this, and this alone was true Religion; that it came with Man into the World at the Creation, was lost by the Fall, and was designed to be restored by the Redemption; was figured and typified by the Sacrifices under the Law, and was to be fulfilled and established under the Gospel; that this was no Secret to the holy Men and Prophets of old; that the Royal Psalmist, who had said to God,
a Thou desirest no Sacrifice, else would I give it thee; but thou delightest not in Burnt-offerings. The Sacrifices of God [i. e. the only Sacrifices God delights in] are a broken Spirit [i. e. a Will sorry for its Rebellions against the divine Will, and resolved for the future to be pliable and obedient, and to sacrifice it self to the Will of God in all Things] A broken and contrite Heart, O God; thou wilt not despise; i. e. art only pleased and delighted with. The same Royal Prophet in another Place says expressly,
b In Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices for Sin, thou hast had no Pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the Volume of the Book it is written of me) to do thy Will, O God. Which Words our Apostle quotes, and upon which he thus comments: Above, when he had said, Sacrifice, and Offering, and Burnt-Offerings, and Offerings for Sin, thou wouldest not, neither hadst Pleasure therein (which are offered by the Law;) Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy Will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

a Psal. li. 16, 17.

b Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8.

That is, he abolishes the temporary Law, ^a *to bring in everlasting Righteousness*, which came in with the ^b Beginning and first Existence of intelligent Creatures, and shall with them last for ever; *viz.* that most just and righteous Rule and Law, that Creatures should be subject to their Creator, that all finite and dependent Wills should in all Things submit and conform themselves to the infinite and sovereign Will. He abolishes the figurative Sacrifices, to introduce and establish the real one; the sacrificing of our own Will to the Will of God; the dying to our own Will, to live to the Will of God. He abolishes the ritual and ceremonial Religion, to bring in solid and substantial Religion, the Worship of God *in Spirit and in Truth*, the absolute Renunciation and perfect conformity of the Will of Man to the Will of God.

From these Words thus considered, this Doctrine and most important Truth necessarily follows, that *true Religion consists in the Conformity of our Will to the Will of God*, in sacrificing our Wills to God's Will, or in dying to our own Will, and living to the Will of God in all Things.

Religion is usually understood to signify that way of worshipping and serving God which is pleasing and acceptable to him, and consequently renders the Worshipers agreeable to God, and God favourable to the Worshipers.

Now that Worship alone is real and true Re-

^a Dan. ix. 24.

^b *is κεφαλὴ*, at the Head of the Book: (When the Volume of the Creation was first expanded, it was written in every Letter of that Book; that is impressed upon the Nature and Essence of every intelligent Creature.

^c John iv. 23, 24.

ligion,

ligion, which of its own Nature is productive of this Effect; and all other Religion is either figurative or instrumental; figurative, to shew, as in an Image and Picture, what true Religion is; or instrumental, that is, Means of arriving at and obtaining it.

And that Religion or Worship is properly said to be naturally productive of this Effect, *viz.* of rendring the Worshippers acceptable to God, and God gracious to the Worshippers, which springs and flows from the Nature of God, and the Nature of Man, and from the mutual Relation they stand in to each other.

1. When therefore I have shewn that the entire Conformity of our Wills to the Will of God in all Things, must, from the Nature of God and Man, make us acceptable to God, and God gracious to us;

2. When I have shewn that this Conformity of our Wills to God's Will constitutes both our Holiness and Happiness;

3. When I have shewn that to bring the Will of Man to this Conformity, was the End and Design both of the *Law*, and of the *Gospel*; and indeed of all Revelation whatsoever;

4. When I have shewn that this Submission of our Will to the Will of God in all Things is the only Sacrifice and Worship worthy of God, as being the highest, nay properly speaking, the only one we have of our own to offer;

5. When I have shewn that all other Religion in Comparison of this, is but figurative and instrumental, and only like the *Means* to the *End*;

Then

Then I think I shall have fully proved, that *true Religion consists only in the entire Conformity of the Will of Man to the Will of God*; and consequently that they fall infinitely short of their Account, and will be miserably deceived, who place their Religion and Hopes of Salvation in any Thing else; and that therefore this is what we ought above all Things to aim at, and endeavour after.

1. *First*, then I shall endeavour to shew, that the entire Conformity of our Wills to the Will of God in all Things, must from the Nature of God and Man, make us acceptable to God, and God gracious to us.

It is very evident that all Creatures are the Effects of God's Will; that the very Reason of their Existence and Nature, of their Being, and being such as they are, is only the Will of God, because so it pleased their great Creator. And all the Beauties and Perfections of the divine Nature, the Attributes of Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, which all concurred in the Production of Things, and contributed each their several Part; and stampt their several Characters upon the whole, and each single part of the Creation; whereby it became all perfectly harmonious, beautiful and glorious, perfectly good, pleasant and delightful, in full Activity, Energy and Vigour; all and every one of these Attributes, I say, were influenced, animated, actuated, and set on Work by the divine Will. Nay farther, not only the Creatures themselves, but the very Ideas of Creatures in the divine Mind, were the Effect and Product of the divine Will.

So that the Will of God is the original Spring and Source of all Things, and the first Cause, not only of the Things themselves, but even of their original Patterns.

Again, the divine Attributes and Perfections, though formally distinct, so that the Idea of one is not the precise Idea of another, yet by Reason of the divine Simplicity and Unity, communicate themselves so fully and perfectly to one another, that one is what all the rest are, excepting the *personal* Distinctions: For Instance, though the Will of God is not formally his Wisdom or Justice, nor the Idea of God's Will the Idea of his Power, yet all these Attributes are fully communicated to the Will: The Will partakes of them all, is united to them all, is one with them all; and therefore, though the Will of God cannot, strictly speaking, be called God's Justice, or Wisdom, or Holiness, &c. yet the Will of God is just, is wise, is holy, is powerful, is good, &c. and is eternally and infinitely all this.

Now since the divine Will is the first Cause, even in the first Cause it self, and the supreme ruling and governing Attribute, even in the supreme Ruler and Governor of all:

Since the Will of God is the Cause and Reason of the Existence of all Things, of their several Natures and Qualities, of their several Relations and Habitudes to one another, and of their several Ends and Uses:

And since the Will of God necessarily partakes of, and is essentially and inseparably one with all his other Attributes:

E

Hence

Hence it follows that the Will of God is the original Standard of Good and Evil, natural and moral, of just and unjust, of right and wrong; that whatever is conformable to it is therefore wise, *a holy, just and good*; and that whatever is contrary to it is therefore foolish, impure, unjust and evil.

Hence it follows, that whatever intelligent Creatures continue perfectly conformable to the divine Will, they preserve the Characters of those divine Attributes and Perfections, with which the Will of God is inseparably attended, and which were originally impressed and stamp'd upon them by the Hand of God at their Creation, as so many Marks of the great Artist and Workman that made them; and consequently they continue wise, just, pure, holy, good, all beautiful, all glorious, and happy: If they rebel against the divine Will and act contrary to it, then of natural Necessity they fall into a direct contrary State, and become foolish, unjust, impure, sinful, evil, deformed and miserable; and of Necessity must continue thus in a State contrary to the divine Nature, as long as they continue to act contrary to the divine Will.

Hence it follows, that the original, supreme, and indispensable Law written and engraven upon the very Nature and Essence of an intelligent Creature, and given it together with its Being, is its entire Dependence upon its Creator, and the full, absolute, and perfect Submission and Conformity of its Will to the Will of God: And

* Rom. vii. 12.

that the Sanctions of Reward and Punishment that accompany this Law, are founded in the inmost Nature, Constitution, and Properties of Things, and that they execute themselves; so that it cannot be fulfilled without the Happiness, nor broken without the Misery of the Creature. For if all Things were according to the Will of God, they would necessarily be in a State conformable to the Nature of God: And infinite Goodness cannot will or effect Evil; infinite Happiness cannot will or cause Pain and Misery. Nothing but Good can flow from infinite Goodness; nothing but Happiness from supreme Felicity. Therefore of Necessity, all Things that are in the Will of God, or are perfectly such as God would have them to be, must according to their several Natures, Capacities, and Degrees, be as God himself is, good and happy. As on the contrary, whatever Creature is out of, or acts contrary to the Will of God, must of Necessity be evil and miserable; for that which is contrary to Goodness must be evil; that which is contrary to Happiness must be miserable; and whatever is contrary to the Will of God, is contrary to all that God is.

Hence also it necessarily follows, that no sinful miserable Creature can ever recover its lost Holiness and Happiness, but by a full and absolute Submission and Conformity of its own Will to the Will of God; this naturally leads me to the next Point, but I must first draw one Conclusion more.

Hence therefore it follows, that this Conformity of our Will to the Will of God, is the

Effence and Substance, the Life and Soul of true Religion; that this must necessarily render us acceptable to God, and God gracious and favourable to us; and that the Want of it necessarily renders us contrary to God, and God contrary to us; for to suppose it possible for God to approve and love what is contrary to his Will and Nature, or not to approve and love what is agreeable to it, is to suppose him to disapprove and hate himself, which of all Absurdities is the most absurd.

I proceed secondly to shew, that this Conformity of our Wills to the Will of God, constitutes both our Holiness and Happiness.

The Will of God (as I shewed above) is the original Standard of moral Good. The Will of God then being *holy, and just, and good*, whatever is conformable to it, or one with it, must *eo ipso* be holy, just, and good too. The Conformity then of our Wills to God's Will, or the Desire and Delight in, and Resolution to do the Will of God in all Things, is the vital Principle, Source, and Spring of all Holiness. All Duties, all Virtues, all Graces are included in it, in Epitome, and in little; as all the several Branches of a great Tree are contained in a little Seed; for as all the different Actions and Motions of the Body, flow from one and the same Principle of Life, differently applied to different Things; so all Duties and Virtues are the Product of this one Principle of Conformity to God's Will, differently applied to different Objects. He that possesses this, in

Effect

Effect possesses all ; but he that is destitute of it, has no Virtue or Holiness at all.

For so essential is the Conformity of our Will to God's Will, to the very Being and Constitution of Virtue, that, without it, Virtue loses its Nature ; and, like a Body destitute of the vital Spirit that should animate it, is only a foetid Carcass of Virtue. It is not the bare Act, but it is the inward Spring of Action that makes the Difference between false and true, seeming and real Virtue ; as it is not the meer Motion, but the Principle of Life from which the Motion flows, that distinguishes between a Man and a Machine. No Action is an Action of true Virtue but what a Man does upon this Principle, and for this Reason, that it is the Will of God. Nothing is real Virtue but what a Man does on Purpose, and with a Design to do God's Will and to please him. An Action may have the Matter but not the Form ; it may have the Appearance, but not the Substance and Essence of Virtue. A Man that does an Act of Justice to another not as it is God's Will, but Man's, that is, for fear of the Punishment of the Law ; this in Reality and in the Sight of God, is not an Action of *Justice* but of *Policy*. He may indeed obey the Law of Man, but he does not obey the Law of God ; and therefore though he may appear just to Men, yet he is not just before God.

Nay farther, Virtue does not only lose its Nature for want of this vital Principle of the Conformity of Man's Will to the Will of God, but commonly, if not always, degenerates into

Vice; thus for Instance, he that does an Act of Charity or Alms-giving not to please God, but to be seen and esteemed of Men, that Man is not charitable but vain-glorious. He that denies his Appetite, not to do the Will of God, but to save his Money, that Man is not temperate but covetous.

Nay farther, if a Man gives himself to Devotion for the Sake of the inward Pleasure which is sometimes felt in it, that Man serves himself, not God; he does it to please himself, not God; and under the Cloak of Devotion hides only a more refined and spiritual Luxury: for in the Case of Prayer and Devotion, as well as in all other Duties, the doing the Will of God, not our own Pleasure, ought to be our only End and Motive.

Thus then the Conformity of our Wills to the Will of God, is the vital and constitutive Principle of Holiness. When this first begins to take place in us, our Holiness begins; as this Disposition increases, our Holiness encreases; when it is brought to Perfection, our Holiness is perfected too; if it decreases, our Holiness decreases, and when it is extinguished, all Holiness immediately expires. Sanctification or Holiness is the separating the Will from all Things whatsoever, and dedicating and consecrating it and giving it up wholly and entirely to God: Which when it is done, all the other Faculties and Powers of Soul and Body immediately follow; *Macla cor, & mutabitur corpus*, saith St. Augustine.

Again the Conformity of our Wills to the Will of God, is the only Source and Spring of
true

true Happiness; whenever we fix our Desires and set our Affections upon, and place our Joy and Delight in any Thing but the Will of God, we lay the Foundation of our Misery; and do but heap and treasure up to our selves a Stock of Trouble and Vexation. And this the generality of Mankind find and feel by Experience; for whatsoever it is that we set our Hearts upon, Life, Liberty, Health, Strength, Wit, Beauty, Children, Relations, Friends, Learning, Fame, Honour, Riches, Pleasures, Diversions: Whatever it is, I say, that our Wills are bent upon, it is subjected to one or other of these mortifying Circumstances:

Either we cannot obtain what we so earnestly desire, and then we are in the Trouble and Vexation of Disappointment, in the Pain of an eager and fierce Appetite unsatisfied, which resembles the gnawing of an hungry Stomach destitute of Food;

Or if we do obtain our Desires, we frequently find that the Pleasure is not so great in the Enjoyment, as it was in the Expectation, and then we fall into the Uneasiness of being balk'd;

Or if it answer Expectation for the present, it soon satiates and cloy; the Edge of the Appetite abates, and by frequent Use and wearing grows dull and blunt, and then we are under the Uneasiness of a Stomach nauseated with perpetual Fullness;

Or lastly, if we are in actual and full Possession of our Heart's Desire, and it continues to delight us, and we to delight in it; yet we are not only liable to be deprived of it every Mo-

ment, and so consequently must live in the continual Uneasiness of Fear and Apprehension; but infallibly, in a little Time, that will either be taken from us, or we from it, and then we fall into the Pain and Anguish of one that is rob'd and spoil'd of all his Happiness; and the greater our Delight was in the Possession, the severer will be the Torment of the Privation.

Nay farther, we shall find our selves mistaken, if we set our Hearts upon, and place our Happiness in, even the sensible Sweetnesses and Consolations we feel in our Devotions and religious Exercises, or in the Practice of any other Duties; for besides that these are very often the Effect of Nature and Constitution, and so liable to as many Changes and Alterations, as the Temper they flow from, and depend upon; yet supposing them to be the Effects of Grace, we cannot depend upon the constant Enjoyment of them: For these, as spiritual Writers observe, are the Allurements that the infinite Wisdom of God makes use of to draw young Converts, and fix them more closely to him; by letting them taste and see that there are Pleasures in Religion, infinitely sweeter than the Pleasures of Sin: Which after some time God usually withdraws, in order to try the Sincerity and Strength of their Love, and to prove whether they follow him only for their own Pleasure, or for his Honour and Glory. They are the Food of Children and, ^a *Babes*, which must be withdrawn in

^a Heb. v. 13, 14. 1 Cor. iii. 2.

order to our growing Men; for though the *Bread of Men* be hard and dry, and consequently not so sweet and pleasing to the Palate as the *Milk of Children*; yet it is far more strengthening and invigorating, and therefore must take place of it.

Now when this comes to pass, and come it certainly will, if ever we *grow in Grace*, and make any Approaches towards becoming *perfect Men*, and arriving at *the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ*^a, what must become both of our Religion and Happiness, if we have founded them only upon our Pleasure, and our inward delightful Sensations? Must they not fall like a Fabrick whose Foundation is taken away? This is the very Reason why many Persons are so inconsolable upon the decaying, or total Extinction of that pleasing Fervour of Spirit they used to feel in their Devotions, that they even augment their Misery by their Trouble and Grief for the Loss of what they counted their Happiness; and that, sometimes, impatient under the Uneasiness of being deprived of their Pleasure, they forsake God, and quit the Way of Religion, and try to make themselves amends for the Loss of their spiritual Pleasures, by giving themselves up to the Enjoyments of Sense.

But if we would build our Happiness upon a sure, lasting, and immovable Foundation, we must fix our Desires, our Pleasure, Joy, and Delight in the Will of God accomplished in us, by us, and upon us; in the Will of God, I say,

^a Eph. iv. 13.

purely as it is the Will of God, without any Regard or Consideration whether it be bitter or sweet, pleasing or displeasing to us. Our Pleasure should be that God is pleased with us: Our Content should lie in God's being content with us: And our Delight and Happiness should be, that our adorable Creator is glorified in us according to his own Will. This is what the Scripture calls ^b *delighting, and having our Joy in the Lord.*

Whoever is in this Disposition and State of Soul, will find Ease and Content in all Circumstances and Conditions. Nothing can come amiss to him. He looks upon every Thing that happens in the Course of Providence as the Will of God; and whatever comes from God's Hand is always welcome to him. If his outward and inward Circumstances be comfortable and pleasant, he is pleased with them as they are the Will and Pleasure of God; if they are painful and disconsolate, still he is pleased with them because they are the Will and Pleasure of God. What he has is what he wants, and what he wishes; what he has not, he desires not. He is rich even in Poverty, he is easy under Trouble, and is happy in Spight of Suffering. Such Persons, the Apostle St. Paul describes, ^a *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all Things; thus, ^d there may be rich Men that have nothing, and poor that have great Riches;* such Persons can with a View to

^a Psal. xxxvii. 4.

^b 2 Cor. vi. 10.

^c Prov. xiii. 7.

God's Glory, *glory in their Infirmities*; because the greater their Weakness is, the more it magnifies and exalts the divine Power to be strong in it. Thus again St. Paul, *Most gladly therefore will I glory in my Infirmities, that the Power of Christ may rest upon me; for his Strength is made perfect in Weakness. Therefore I take Pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong^a.*

To have our *Delight be in the Will of God*, is a never-failing Fund, an inexhaustible Source of Content and Peace, of Joy and Happiness. As it is founded upon the *Rock of Ages*, it does in some Measure partake of his Immutability; nothing can shake or remove it. He that delights in God's Will, and looks upon every Thing that happens as God's Will, finds the same Matter of Content and Satisfaction, of spiritual Joy and Delight in all Circumstances and Conditions. He is not elevated with Prosperity, nor dejected with Adversity. His Mind keeps still in the same Posture and Position, his Spirit is not lifted up with an high Fortune, nor cast down with a low one, but fixt upon the same Object, the Will of God; keeps the same Tenour in all outward Differences: Like the Centre of a Ball or Globe which remains fixed and unmovable, and keeps the same Place and Situation within, howsoever it is tossed up and down, and whatsoever Injuries

^a 2 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

its Surface may receive without. If our *Hearts be surely* and firmly *fixed there, where true Joys are only to be found*, that is upon the Will of God, we shall not value all *the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life*.

This is that Joy in which the World has no Concern, and over which it has no Influence; which it can neither give nor take away; which all its Pleasures do not raise, nor all its Pains abate. The Power and Energy of this spiritual and divine Joy is so great as to maintain it self and subsist in the midst of Sorrow, to enable us to *rejoice in Tribulations*, and to make us happy even in Misery: Like those *Phosphorus's*, or strong Compositions of Fire, which will burn even in Water. And in truth, this Disposition which I have been drawing, is nothing but a Description in other Words of pure celestial Flame of divine Charity or the Love of God, which is so potent a Fire that ^a *many Waters cannot extinguish it, neither can the Floods drown it,* ^b *and it is as strong as Death*.

If then we would have a Happiness that is not subjected to Time and Chance; if we would have a Happiness that is not liable to be changed with every Change that happens to us in Life; if we would have a Happiness that every Blast of Wind should not blow down, nor every Wave wash away; we must not found it upon the moveable *Sand*, any Thing that is changeable and of a fleeting Nature, as all Things, States, and Conditions in this World

^a Cant. viii. 7. Ver. 6.

are, but we must found it upon the *Rock* of God's Will, Pleasure, and Glory ; and then neither Storms nor Tempests, Floods nor Earthquakes, will ever be able to shake it, much less remove it.

I am very sensible that this is but a dry and insipid kind of Happiness, and cold Comfort to Nature ; nor can it be, nor indeed ought to be otherwise. This is not the proper Happiness of the Flesh, but of the Spirit. This Happiness is not designed nor fitted for Nature ; nor is Nature, while it remains impure and corrupt, fit even for its own proper Happiness. This World is the Place where Nature is to suffer, not enjoy. Therefore that the Man may not be wholly miserable, a spiritual Happiness is to be sought for, to sustain him under, and countervail the Pains and Sufferings, or Misery of the outward Man.

But however tasteless and comfortless an Happiness this may seem, yet it is most certain, that every Man living will sometime or other find himself reduced to such Circumstances, as that if he cannot say his only Comfort in them is, that they are the Will and Pleasure, and for the Glory of God ; he must have no Comfort at all, but be absolutely and thoroughly miserable.

When the Days of Darkness and Gloominess come upon us, even *the Days wherein we shall say, we have no Pleasure in them* ; when our Joy is turned into Sorrow, and our Mirth into Mourning ; when our Pleasures are succeeded by Pains, and our Abundance by the Want of all Things ; when it is as black and dismal within

as it is without, when *without are Fightings, and within are Fears*; Nay, when even our Hope, that *Anchor of the Soul*, seems to have slipped from us; when that friendly Star which only was our Guide and Comfort, by which alone we steered in the Dangers of the tempestuous Night, is darkened and eclipsed by our cloudy Fears; and though it be not really extinct and lost, but only hid, yet we are deprived of all sensible Comfort from it, by reason of our Doubts and Apprehensions springing from a Sense of our unworthiness; when we come to experience both outward and inward Destitution, when all Men and all Creatures forsake us, nay and God himself seems to forsake us too; then, I say, if we can find no *Rest to our Souls*, and no Content in these States from hence, that it is God's Will and for his Glory that we should be in them and suffer them, then certainly, *we shall be of all Men most miserable.*

And that all Men will find themselves in some such kind of Circumstances, in one Degree or another, one Time or other, we have all the Reason in the World to believe. Since it is certain, this is the Method God has made use of to try and purify his dearest Children, his faithfullest Servants and best beloved Favourites. The most eminent in Sanctity have been the most remarkable for suffering. ^a *Job*, ^b *David*, and ^c *Jeremiah*, have left us many and large Descriptions

^a Job iii. *per tot.* vi. 4. vii. 12.—20. viii. 17, 18, 27, 28, 30, 31. xiii. 24, 26. xxvii. 2. ^b Psal. vi. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7. xiii. 1. xviii. 4, 5. xxii. 1, 2, 6, 7, 12.—18. xxxii. 4. xxxviii. *per tot.* xlii. 6, 7. li. 11. ^c Lament. iii. 1.—18.

of their outward and inward Afflictions. And the Saint of Saints, *the holy One of God*, the blessed *Jesus*, the Model of all the *Elect of God*, expired, we know, in a Sense of inward as well as outward Destitution; and was seemingly and in Appearance as much forsaken by ^a God as Man^a. Add to this, that this is the only Way to break, mortify, crucify, and extinguish our Self-Will, which is the only Root and Source of our Sin and Misery; and to bring it to an entire Conformity to, or Union with the Will of God, which is the only Source of Holiness and Happiness.

Wheresoever else therefore Men place their Happiness, excepting in the Will of God, it will one Time or other slip from under them. And they will at last be taught by dear-bought Experience, and be convinced by the most powerful, but in this Case most melancholy Argument, *viz.* a miserable Event; that the conforming our Wills to God's Will in all Things, or the fixing our Desires upon, and placing our Joy and Delight purely in the Will of God, is the Happiness, the only Happiness of Life. *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear. He that will receive it, let him receive it.*

He that can find a surer Ground to rest the Sole of his Foot on, after a weary Flight in Search and Pursuit after Happiness, there let him rest it. He that can find a better and firmer Foundation to build his Happiness upon, there let him fix it.

For my own part, I cannot find any, and there-

^a Matth. xxvii. 46.

fore am determined through the divine Assistance here to fix and set up my Rest; *and my Heart's Desire and Prayer to God is*, for all that desire *to worship God in Spirit and in Truth*, and to adore the sovereign Will with the Homage of their own, that the infinitely wise, just and good, the most glorious and lovely Will of God may be all Things to them, and *all in all* in them. *And as many as walk according to this Rule, Peace be on them, and on the Israel of God.* And this Disposition we may be sure will be a never-failing Source of Peace and Happiness to us; for when *God himself is our Portion, God will maintain our Lot*; and our Spirit will say, whatever the Flesh suffers, *the Lot is fallen to me in a fair Ground, yea I have a goodly Heritage.*

Let us then learn to use and accustom our selves to place our Delight and Happiness, not in what we feel or do not feel, not in enjoying what is pleasing, or in being free from what is painful to Nature, but purely in doing or suffering the blessed Will of God; and then every Moment will bring our Content, as it brings the Will of God along with it. We shall meet our Happiness *in every Time and Place*; with this we shall be really happy, though never so seemingly miserable; and without it we shall be really miserable, though never so seemingly happy.



SERMON IV.

Conformity of the Will of Man
to the Will of God, the only
true Religion.

HEB. X. 9.

*Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy Will,
O God.*



FROM these Words considered with
their Context, I proposed to shew,
that *true Religion consists only in the
entire Conformity of the Will of
Man to the Will of God.*

This I proposed to prove from the five follow-
ing Points.

F

First,

First, That the entire Conformity of our Wills to the Will of God in all Things, must from the Nature of God and Man make us acceptable to God, and God gracious to us.

Secondly, That this Conformity of our Wills to God's Will, constitutes both our Holiness and Happiness.

Thirdly, That to bring the Will of Man to this Conformity, was the End and Design both of the Law, and of the Gospel; and indeed of all Revelation whatsoever.

Fourthly, That this Submission of our Will to the Will of God in all Things, is the only Sacrifice and Worship worthy of God, as being the highest, nay properly speaking, the only one we have of our own to offer.

Fifthly, That all other Religion in Comparison of this, is but figurative and instrumental, and only like the *Means* to the *End*. The two first of these I handled at large in a former Discourse, I proceed now,

Thirdly, To shew, that to bring the Will of Man to Conformity to God's Will, was the End and Design both of the Law and the Gospel; and indeed of all Revelation whatsoever.

Every intelligent Creature that is in the Integrity and Perfection of its Nature, that is, such as it came out of the Hands of its Maker, and such as God would have it to be, must necessarily have such a Degree of Knowledge of the Nature and Will of God as is proportioned to its Capacity, and is sufficient to enable it to love, serve, obey, please and glorify the adorable Creator; which is the very End and Design of its Creation.

This

This Knowledge of God can come from no other but God himself; as we cannot know what Light is but by the Light it self. This Knowledge then must be communicated and infused into the Spirit together with its Being in the first Moment of its Existence; and must be continued by the continual immediate Communication of God himself to it. So that every intellectual Creature in this State must see as clearly, and be as infallibly certain of the *Will of God concerning it*, as any Man can see the Path he is to walk in by the Light of the Sun.

This State *the holy Angels, who kept their first Station*, remain still in.

And this State Man was at first created in. In which had he and his Posterity continued, there would have been no need of any outward Revelation. There would have been no need of any Man's *teaching his Neighbour, saying, know the Lord*; they would *all have known him from the least to the greatest*; for they *would all have been taught of God*. And according to the divine Wish of *Moses, all the Lord's People would have been Prophets, and the Lord would have put his Spirit upon every one of them*. Which blessed State the prophetick Writings foretel and promise shall, in an eminent Manner, be accomplished in God's People before the End of the World; and shall infallibly be perfect and consummate in every one, that is so happy as to have his Lot in the happy Eternity.

This immediate Communication with God was lost by the Fall of Man; and his Light and

Knowledge were succeeded by Darkneſs and Ignorance.

When therefore God was pleaſed to receive Man to Mercy, and to take him in Hand again, it was neceſſary that he ſhould make a new Revelation and Diſcovery of himſelf, of his Nature and of his Will, proportioned to fallen Man's Capacity, and ſufficient for the great End of his Recovery and Reſtoration.

This he has been pleaſed to do, *at ſundry Times, and in diverſe Manners*, ſuited to the different Circumſtances and Neceſſities of Mankind in different Ages and Periods of the World. In which he has always had ſome Souls holy and pure enough to receive the immediate Communications of his Will from himſelf; and then made uſe of them as Inſtruments of conveying his Will to the reſt of Mankind, who by reaſon of their Groſſneſs and Impurity, were not capable of immediate Communication with God: As a ſkilful Phyſician makes uſe of outward Application, when the Patient is too weak to bear internal Medicines.

St. *Chryſoſtom* ſays, that it is Mankind's Fault to ſtand in need of a written Word; that Men ought to have their Hearts and Lives ſo pure, as that the Grace of the holy Spirit ſhould be inſtead of Books to them; and that their Hearts ought to be written upon with the Spirit, as Books are with Ink.

And a little after, he expreſſly aſſerts that it was the Corruption and Deſection of the *Jews*, and even of the *Chriſtians* in the Apoſtles Days, that made the Writing of the Word to be neceſſary;

cessary; for he observes, that to *Noah*, *Abraham* and their Posterity, to *Job* and *Moses*, God spake not by Writing, but by himself, because their Hearts were pure. And that Christ delivered nothing in Writing to the Apostles, but instead of Books promised them the Gift of the holy Spirit. But that after some Time, when some grew corrupt in Faith and Doctrine, others in Life and Manners, then there was need of Instruction in Writing^a.

But whatever Difference there may have been in the Manner, or even the Matter of Revelations made at different Times, according as the Tempers, Capacities, and Necessities of Men have differed in the different Ages of the World: Yet all Revelations whatsoever agree in this as their End and Design, *viz.* to discover and make known the Will of God to Men, that Men may conform their Wills to the Will of God; for all Revelation being designed as a Means for the Recovery of Man, and the Way to his Recovery being of Necessity the direct contrary to that by which he fell, and his Fall being occasioned by, or rather consisting in the Opposition, Contrariety and Rebellion of his Will to the Will of God; it is most plain and evident, that whatever is designed by infinite Wisdom for a Means of Man's Recovery, must be designed as a Means to bring his Will into an entire Submission and an absolute and perfect Conformity to the Will of God.

^a *S. Chrysostom. i. Homil. in Matt. in initio.*

Which I shall now proceed to shew, particularly of the several Revelations in several Ages of the World.

It has been observed that there is a just Analogy, and a great Likeness and Resemblance in many Things, between the whole Body of Mankind from first to last, and one single Man; that there is a great Resemblance between the different Tempers of Men in the several Ages of the World, and the different Temper of the same Man in the several Periods of his Life. That the Time from the Creation to *Moses*, may be reckoned the World's Infancy and Childhood; the Time under the Law its Youth; the Time under the Gospel its Manhood; *the last Days*, or *the falling away* of Christianity, its old Age and Decay, the Dregs of Life, after which nothing is to be expected but its Dissolution, in order to its Renovation. And part of this Observation is justified and asserted, and consequently the rest countenanced by St. *Paul*, who expressly compares the People under the *Mosaical* Law to a Youth under the Care of Tutors and Governors. ^a And in another place speaking conformably to this Similitude, he says, that ^b *the Law was our Schoolmaster*.

In pursuance of this Analogy we may observe, that in the Patriarchal Dispensation, in the first Ages and Infancy of the World, the Temper of Mankind resembled that of a Child, which is pliable and governable, easy to be led and di-

^a Gal. iv. 1, 2, 3.

^b Gal. iii. 24.

rected, and ready to obey; and has not contracted any ill Habits of Self-will, Stubbornness and Obstinacy. That this is the Reason why there were so few, if any extraordinary Revelations during that Period.

It being sufficient for the great Simplicity and tractable Temper of those Ages, to be left to the *common* and *ordinary Revelation*, which God makes of himself in one Degree or other to every Soul; that is, to those innate Notions of a Deity, of Good and Evil, of Just and Unjust, of Right and Wrong, which are commonly called and thought to be the Light of Nature^a, or natural Religion; but are in Truth the Light of God shining in the Souls of Men, and Rays of that divine Light *which lightneth every Man that cometh into the World*; and part of that *universal and preventing Grace*, which was, by the adorable Redeemer, merited for, and communicated to *Adam* and to all Mankind in him: Who as they were *all in the Loins of their Father Adam* when he sinned, and thereby became Partakers of his Corruption; so were they also when he was received to Favour again, and thereby were made Partakers of the Blessing and Grace conferred upon him.

^a It may in a good Sense be called *the Light of Nature*; not as it proceeds from, or is a part of human Nature, but as it is *common* to human Nature, as it is an *inseparable* Concomitant and *Adjunct* to human Nature, infused by God into every Soul of Man at its first Existence: All spiritual Light proceeding from God, as all material Light from the Sun. And as the corporeal Light does not proceed from the Body, nor is part of the Body, so neither does spiritual Light proceed from the Soul, nor is part of its Nature; and, in this Sense, *St. Paul* is to be understood, where he says, the *Gentiles do by Nature* the things contained in the Law, *Rom. ii. 14.*

This God affords to all Men according to their several Capacities, and as they are able to bear it. And though in some parts of the World there appear but a very small Glimmering of this Light among Mankind, and even that too very much obscured and darkned by their natural Corruptions: Yet it never was totally extinct in any of the Race of *Adam*. And in all the Discoveries of unknown Regions, there never was any People found, but what had some Light of Truth, though mixed with much Darknes and Error, some Notions and Apprehensions of a superior Being, whom we call God, and of some Things pleasing or displeasing to him; some Notions of Good and Evil, Just and Unjust. This is that τὸ γνωστὸν τῷ Θεῷ, *a that which may be known of God*, which Knowledge of God St. Paul affirms the *Gentiles* to have had, and to have had it from God himself too, saying, *Rom. i. 19. That which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it to them.* This is that Law which St. Paul says, was ^b *written in the Hearts of the Gentiles*: That ^c *Law by which they shall be judged*; that is, no doubt, acquitted if they follow and obey it, and condemned if they disobey it. Nay the Apostle strongly affirms, that the following this inward Light, and *fulfilling the Righteousness* of this inward Law, shall be imputed to them as if they had obeyed the written Law and external Revelation. *If the Uncircumcision keep the Righteousness of the Law,*

^a Rom. i. 19.^b Rom. ii. 15.^c Rom. ii. 12.

shall not his Uncircumcision be counted for Circumcision^a?

This Light though now so much darkned and obscured among those who are unassisted with the outward Revelation, yet in the earliest Ages of the World shone in upon the Minds of Men with great Strength and Brightness, by Reason of the great Simplicity, Purity, and Innocence of those Ages, compared with those that followed. And besides the Clearness of this *innate Light*, the Men of those Times might, as Necessity required, have had Recourse to the Direction and Instruction of the Patriarchs themselves; many of whom were so pure and holy, as to enjoy immediate Communication with God himself. And this was sufficient for the pliable and manageable Temper of those Ages, to bring the Wills of Men to a Conformity to the Will of God.

Consider we now Mankind as in the State of Youth, under the Dispensation of the *Mosaical Law*. In this Period of Life, though there be no strong vicious Inclinations to struggle with, and no inveterate evil Habits contracted, yet Self-will begins to peep out and discover it self; the Passions begin to stir and rise a little; and vicious Dispositions begin to shoot up from the Root of Sin, Original Corruption.

The wise Father then puts the Youth under careful and watchful *Tutors* and *Governors*, under an awful *Schoolmaster*, under a strict Discipline and severe Restraint, in order to break

^a Rom, ii, 26;

his Self-will, to form his Mind to Virtue, to engage him effectually to conform his Will to the Will of God, by inuring him constantly to submit himself to the Will of his Superiors; and by accustoming him to an exact Obedience in different and lesser Matters at present, to secure his Obedience in Things of greater Moment for the future. And this St. *Paul* says was the very Office and End of the Law, *viz.* to be a *Schoolmaster to bring Men to Christ*^a; to fit them by preparatory Exercises, for higher Degrees and more difficult Parts of Learning; by using them to strict and severe Discipline in lesser Things, to render their Wills pliable and obedient in more difficult Duties; by accustoming them to an exact Obedience to the Precepts of the Law, to prepare their Minds for more difficult and exalted Virtues, and severer Trials and Sufferings under the Gospel.

And indeed, nothing could be better fitted and contrived than the *Mosaical* Law for breaking Man's Self-will, and making it pliable and conformable to the Will of God. The Number, and Variety of its Precepts were so great, that Men were forced to be perpetually upon their Guard. There was scarce an Event of Providence, scarce an Action of common Life into which the Law did not enter, and about which it did not give Directions; which if they neglected, the Rod hung over their Heads and threatned Correction. There was a legal Satisfaction to be made for every Offence against the Law, which if they contemned, then the

^a Gal. iii. 24.

Terrors of the Law were let loose upon them, the Thunder and Lightning of Mount *Sinai* fell upon them, and Death without Mercy ^a was the Sentence the Law awarded against them. Which, to render the Punishment more terrible and exemplary, was sometimes executed by the immediate Hand of God himself.

This though a severe, was yet a most excellent Discipline to break Self-will, and make it submissive and obedient; and whoever was faithful in the Exercise and Practice of it, was thoroughly prepared to conform his Will to the Will of God, in faithfully practising that Self-denial and Mortification of corrupt Nature, and in chearfully undergoing those Sufferings with Constancy, which the following Dispensation of the Gospel required.

And to prevent all Mistakes, God was pleased frequently by his Prophets to interpret and declare to the *Jews*, his general End and Design in the Law; and to let them know that he ordained them all those ceremonial Observances, not for any real and intrinsick Good in the Nature of the Things themselves, but on Purpose to make their Will submissive, pliable, and obedient to his. Thus *David*: *Thou desirest no Sacrifice, — Thou delightest not in Burnt-Offerings; the Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit* ^b. And again, *Sacrifice and Meat-Offering thou wouldest not. — Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifice for Sin hast thou not required: Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy Will O God* ^c.

^a Heb. x. 28. ^b Psal. li. 16, 17. ^c Psal. xl. 8, 9, 10. *Old Translation.*

And again, *An Offering of a free Heart will I give thee*^a. Thus Samuel: *Hath the Lord as great Delight in Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken than the Fat of Rams*^b. Thus God himself by Jeremiah: *I spake not to your Fathers, nor commanded them in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-Offerings or Sacrifices. But this Thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my Voice*^c. Thus also Moses their Law-giver himself: *Now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy GOD require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in his Ways, to love and serve him with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul? —Circumcise therefore the Fore-skin of your Heart, and be no more stiff-necked*^d.

This was the great Care of the Law, you see, to guard against the Obstinacy and Stubbornness of Self-will, and to teach and accustom Men to ply and bend, and conform their Wills to the Will of God.

Come we now to consider the World under the next great Period, the Dispensation of the Gospel; and here we are to consider Mankind as arrived to the State of Manhood, in the full Strength of Nature, and their corrupt Passions and vicious Inclinations as strong as their Constitutions. We are to consider them now as being strongly assaulted by Temptations to those

^a Psal. liv. 6. *Old Translation*,
vii. 22, 23.

^d Deut. x. 12, 16.

^b 1 Sam. xv. 22.

^c Jer.

Vices, which their Youth was a Stranger to, or at most had experienced but little Symptoms of; such as Lust, Ambition, and Covetousness; and their Desires and Inclinations as violently carried towards, and eagerly bent upon, *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*, sensual Pleasures, Riches, and Honours. We must consider them too as superstitiously attached to their Law, and defeating the very End and Design of it by their too great Adherence to it and Trust in it; by thinking they should be accepted of God for their outward legal Purity, without the inward Purity of the Heart. Thus making the Law fortify that Self-will it was designed to break, and cherish that Corruption which it was to prepare Men to mortify and destroy.

Now what could possibly be the End and Design of the following Dispensation, but to correct the Errors, and rectify the Miscarriages, which Men had fallen into in the foregoing? to shew them that the Law was not ordained for any intrinsic *Goodness* in it self, but to be a Means of keeping the Will of Man continually submissive to the Will of God? to teach Men the absolute Necessity of mortifying their vicious and corrupt Desires, Inclinations, and Passions; to deny their Self-Will, and sacrifice it to the divine Will, and to conform the Will of Man in all Things, whether in acting or in suffering, to the Will of God? to teach Mankind, I say, the absolute Necessity of this, to oblige them to it, and to enable them to do it?

And

And this is the great End and Design of the Christian Dispensation. This is the Abridgment, the Sum and Substance of the Gospel. This we are taught and obliged to by the Terms of Christianity, and our baptismal Vow and Covenant; by the Doctrine and Example, by the Life, Sufferings, Passion, and Death of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, the Son of God; who did not only, by his Sacrifice upon the Cross, purchase a Pardon for the former Rebellions of our Will against the divine Will; but also merited for us Grace and Strength, even the Assistance of the holy Spirit, to enable us to conform our Wills to the Will of God in all Things for the future.

Which Grace if we will not lay hold on, and make use of, we neither shall, nor can have, any Part in the general Pardon of Sin procured by his Death; nor any Lot in *the purchased Possession of the Inheritance among the Saints in Light*. The Saviour of Mankind will be no Saviour to us; his all-sufficient Merits will not be sufficient for us; and *the Blood of God*, will, as to us, *be shed in vain*. We shall frustrate the Design of the Gospel, as the *Jews* did that of the Law; and make that which St. Paul calls *the Power of God unto Salvation*^a, to be, as to us, ineffectual and of no Force. Nay, *that which was ordained by God unto Life* we shall turn into Death, and make the Means of Happiness and Salvation become Occasions of our greater Misery and Damnation.

^a Rom. i. 16.

He that knows his Lord's Will, and does not conform his Will to it, and does it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes ^a. Of this you must be thoroughly convinced, when I have shewn by many clear and express Passages of the Gospel, that the conforming of Man's Will entirely to the Will of God, is the End and Design, the Substance and Essence of the Gospel.

Our blessed Lord, at the close of his divine Sermon on the Mount, acknowledged by all understanding Christians to contain the Sum and Substance of Christ's Doctrine, has these remarkable Words, which seem the Abridgment, the Sum and Substance of the whole foregoing Sermon ^b. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven*, i. e. he whose Will is perfectly conformable in all Things to the Will of God; for *agere nihil aliud est quàm efficaciter velle*; to *Do* is, nothing else but, *effectually to Will*; for the Action is the Action of the Will, the Will is the efficient Cause of it. The Body and all its Members and executive Powers are only Instruments of the Will; and bodily Actions are no more than outward Signs of the inward Determinations of the Will. There are also other Signs of the Will, and these are Words; but they are so very equivocal there is no trusting to them; we must not always depend upon it that the Will is so disposed

^a Luke xii. 47.

^b Matth. vii. 21.

inwardly as they signify outwardly, unless we have a Mind to be deceived; very often they that hear them, and even they that speak them, are imposed upon by them; but Actions are certain and infallible Signs of the Will; and if we would be sure what a Man really wills, we must attend to what he does, not to what he says; to his Works, and not to his Words; for which Reason our blessed Lord in the Passage before us teaches, that the true Conformity of Man's Will to the Will of God, is to be judged of by his Practice, not his Profession; as if, at the close of his heavenly Sermon, he had said thus:

“ I have now plainly and fully declared to
 “ you the Will of God, and God expects that
 “ you should conform your Wills to it; but be-
 “ cause it is very easy to deceive both your
 “ selves and others with verbal Professions;
 “ and because the Things I have commanded
 “ you as the Will of God, are very contrary
 “ and disagreeable to corrupt Nature, and the
 “ Self-will of Man; and consequently Men will
 “ be apt to place their Religion and Hopes of
 “ Heaven in Things they like better: There-
 “ fore, I assure you, and take Notice of it, that
 “ nothing can be available to your Salvation,
 “ but the real and actual Conformity of your
 “ Wills to the Will of God, signified not
 “ in bare Words, but in Actions. *Not e-*
 “ *very one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall*
 “ *enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he*
 “ *that doth the Will of my Father which is in*
 “ *Heaven.*

To

• Ma
 x. 38.
 • Luke

To go on; nothing is so much insisted on in the Doctrine of the Gospel, as *Self-denial*, that is, the denying of our own Will, and conforming it to the Will of God in Things most contrary to the Will of Man, and to the Inclinations and Desires of Flesh and Blood; such as *taking up the Cross* and Suffering. Our blessed Lord expressly says, that unless we *deny our selves*^a, unless we *take up and bear our Cross*^b, unless we *forsake and part with all that we have*^c, i. e. forsake it in Heart and Affection, and actually part with it willingly whenever God wills and requires it; unless we renounce the strongest Affections and Inclinations of our Nature, and act contrary to them; if we *hate not* (i. e. if, when God calls, we forsake not) *our Father and Mother, Wife and Children, Brethren and Sisters, and our own Lives also*, we are not *Christ's Disciples*, we are not Christians^d.

Again, this Conformity of the Will of Man to the Will of God, we are taught to seek and desire above all Things, and to endeavour to procure both in our selves and others. *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*^e. Now God can never be said to reign in the Heart and Soul of Man, unless the Man submits in all Things to be ordered, ruled, and governed by the Will of God, i. e. unless he conform his Will entirely to God's Will. This also our blessed Lord has

^a Matth. xvi. 24. Mark viii. 34. Luke ix. 23. ^b Matth.

x. 38. Luke xiv. 27.

^c Mark x. 21. Luke xiv. 33.

^d Luke xiv. 26.

^e Matth. vi. 33.

taught us above all Things to desire, to aim at, and endeavour after, having taught us continually to pray for it before all Things; these being the first Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, that God may be glorified, *his Kingdom come, and his Will be done*.^a

If we pass from the Doctrine to the Example of the blessed Jesus, we shall find that Conformity to the Will of God, was *all in all* with him. Thus he says expressly of himself, *My Meat is to do the Will of him that sent me*.^b His Will was so conformed to, and one with the Will of God, that it was the Pleasure and Delight, the Nourishment and Support of his Spirit to do God's Will. Again, *I seek not mine own Will, but the Will of the Father which hath sent me*.^c And again, *I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own Will, but the Will of him that sent me*.^d

And as his Will was thus conformable to the Will of God in his Actions, during his Life; so was it as perfectly conformable in his unspeakable and inconceivable Sufferings at his Passion and Death; wherein he has *left us an Example* of the highest Instance possible, of a most absolute and entire Resignation to the Will of God in Things most contrary and abhorrent to the Will of Man. Thus he says, *Matth. xxv. 38, 39. My Soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto Death, and he fell on his Face, and prayed, saying; O my Father, if it be possible, let*

^a Matth. vi. 10. Luke ii. 2.

^b John vi. 38.

^c John iv. 34.

^d John v.

this Cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt; or as St. Luke ^a expresses it, Not my Will but thine be done.

If we descend from Christ to his Apostles, this we shall find the Sum and Substance of their Writings. They teach us that in the lowest Condition and Circumstances, we should *do the Will of God from the Heart*^b; that Christians ought *not to live to the Lusts of Men, but to the Will of God*^c; that *no Man liveth to himself, or dieth to himself*^d; that *we are not our own, but God's*, and therefore, *should glorify God both in our Bodies and Spirits which are his*^e, that is, entirely conform our Hearts and Lives, our Wills and Actions to the Will of God; whose greatest Glory accruing from Men and all intelligent Creatures is, that his Will alone be done in them and by them; as it is the greatest Dishonour and Affront to the divine Majesty to refuse to submit to his Will.

The Apostles also pray thus for their Flocks; *that they may be perfect and compleat in the Will of God*^f; that God would *make them perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight*^g.

Thus again; The Apostle declares, that all they that are to be *justified and glorified* must be *conformed to the Image of God's Son*^h, whose Character was the perfect Conformity of his

^a Luke xxii. 42.

^d Rom. xiv. 7.

^e Heb. xiii. 21.

^b Ephes. vi. 6.

^c 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

^h Rom. viii. 39.

^f 1 Pet. iv. 2.

^g Col. iv. 12.

Will to his Father's, whose *Motto* and Device it was, *Lo, I come to do thy Will, O God.*

Thus, to crucify the *Flesh*^a; to mortify the *Deeds of the Body*^b; to mortify our *Members which are upon Earth*^c; to purge out the old *Leaven*^d; to put off the old *Man*^e, are only so many different Expressions for one and the same Thing; viz. for mortifying and denying our Self-will, which is called *the old Man*; because it was brought into the World by the first Man, whose Sin and Fall consisted in this; viz. that he opposed, instead of conforming, his Will to the Will of God, and set up and followed his own Self-will in Opposition to God's Will; it is also called the *old Leaven*, because like a poisonous Ferment, the first Sin of our first Father *Adam* diffused it self over, and *leavened the whole Lump* and Mass of Mankind, who *were then in his Loins*; tinged them all with a corrupt Ferment, and gave them a strong Tendency to do as he had done, to follow their own Will and Inclination in Contradiction to the Will of God. And this it is the proper Business of Christianity, and the Work of the holy Spirit to purge our.

Thus again, *The new Man*^f, *the new Creature*^g, which the Apostle says, Christians must *put on*, signify the Disposition directly contrary to that of the *old Man*; the Disposition of Christ the *second Adam* or new Man, which is

^a Gal. v. 24.

^d 1 Cor. v. 7.

^e Ephes. iv. 24.

^b Rom. viii. 13.

^c Rom. vi. 6. Ephes. iv. 22.

^f 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 6.

^g Colof. iii. 5.

Colof. iii. 9, 10.

to conform our Wills to the Will of God in all Things, though never so contrary and disagreeable to our own: Thus, when the Apostle so peremptorily asserts, that *in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature*^a; he plainly means, that nothing in the Christian Religion can avail us any Thing towards Salvation, unless we really and actually conform our Wills in all Things to the Will of God; for thus he explains himself in another place, *Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the Commandments of God*^b.

Lastly, and to mention no more; the Apostle says, that *the End of the Commandment is Charity*^c; that is, the very End and Design of the Gospel-Dispensation is to beget and promote Charity, or the Love of God in the Hearts of Men. Now Charity or the Love of God, is the Submission, Resignation, Conformity and Union of Man's Will to the Will of God, expressed not barely in Words, but Deeds and Actions; *for this is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments*^d.

Thus, I hope, I have made it fully and clearly appear, that the great End and Design of the Law, and of the Gospel, and indeed of all Revelation whatsoever, is to reduce the Will of Man to an entire and perfect Conformity in all Things to the Will of God; without which there is no such Thing as Religion, there is no Holiness, no Happiness.

^a Gal. vi. 15. ^b 1 Cor. vii. 19. ^c 1 Tim. i. 5. ^d 1 John v. 3.

I shall beg your Patience while I draw one Inference from this Head, and so conclude.

If the great End and Design of Revelation in general, and of the Gospel in particular, be to conform our Wills to the Will of God; then they certainly *frustrate the Counsel of God, they receive the Grace of God in vain, and make the Word of God of none Effect*, who use the Scripture to minister to their Curiosity and Vanity; or who use it for *Strife and Contention*, to raise and maintain *Disputes* about the different Senses of it; and much more still, all they who make it an Occasion not only of disputing, but of quarrelling, condemning, hating, persecuting, murdering and damning all those who differ from them in their Sense of it. And yet this, God knows, is almost the one only use that is universally made of the Word of God; as is too evident, by the avowed Sentiments and Actions of all the Sects and Parties into which Christianity is at present so miserably divided: Who by the very little Influence the Word of God has upon their Hearts and Lives, seem to have lost all other use of it, but that of battling one another with it. Thus the Christians at present, as the *Jews* of old at our Saviour's coming, pervert the very End and Intention of their Revelation, thinking to be saved by being of this or that Opinion concerning it, and having this or that Sense of it, though their *Heart is far from God*, and they live in continual Opposition and Contradiction to his Will; taking Occasion from it to nourish and foment that Self-love, which it was designed to destroy; and by mutually condemning and hating

one another for difference in Opinion about it, extinguishing that *Charity*, that Love to God and Man, which Christianity was designed on purpose to beget and promote. Whereas the only true saving Use of the Gospel is for every one to discover, to hate, to fight with and destroy his own Corruptions; to discover God's Will, and conform his own to it; in short, to die to his own Will, that he may live to the Will of God in all Things. And as for those who differ from him in Opinion, to bear with them in the Spirit of Christian Charity, considering that no Man, nor no Set of Men is infallible.





SERMON V.



LUKE II. 12.

Καὶ τὸτο ὑμῖν τὸ σημεῖον· Εὐρήσετε βρέφος ἱσταν-
γνόμενον, κείμενον ἐν τῇ φάτνῃ.

*This shall be a Sign unto you, ye shall
find a Babe wrapped in swadling
Cloaths, and laid in a Manger.*



RE these the Signs of the Birth of
Messiah, the Prince, the Expecta-
tion and Desire of all Nations, the
King of Kings, and Lord of Lords,
Christ the Lord, the Messiah Je-
hovah? Be astonished, O Heavens, and confound-
ed, O Earth! What! God become Man! Im-
mensity contracted into a Span! The Eternal in
the first Day of his Life? Omnipotence reduced

to Weakness it self? and the Signs of all this as astonishing, as the Thing signified? What! the Saviour of the World unable to help himself! the King of *Israel* with no other Palace but a Stable! in no other Throne but a Manger! surrounded with Beasts for his Guards and grand Attendance! It is well these miraculous and amazing Truths met with the Humility, Simplicity and Sincerity of poor, unlearned, ignorant Shepherds, they would have met with but indifferent Reception else, probably have been rejected as fabulous and false. Had this Revelation been made to the Worldly-wise and Learned, to the Scribes, and Pharisees, and Doctors, it would have passed for an Illusion: what Scruples would their foolish Wisdom, and their learned Ignorance have raised? what Objections would their proud and carnal Reasons have suggested? "What! would they have said, " the long foretold, and long expected Messiah, " the most noted Person in our Law come into " the World in such Obscurity! Can he whose " Coming has by our antient Prophets been " foretold with so much Pomp and Majesty, " make his Entrance into the World in a Manner so little suitable, nay, so contrary to the " Grandeur and Solemnity of the prophetick " Descriptions? It is true, this is an uncommon " and surprizing Way of publishing his Birth; " but then this Event does not answer the former Predictions; the poor and mean Circumstances of his Birth, are contrary to, and inconsistent with the Greatness and Dignity of " his Character and Office; therefore though there

“ there be something unaccountable in this Appearance, it must be some subtile Artifice of the Enemy of Mankind, who knowing this to be the Time for his Coming, would amuse us with a false Messiah, to divert us from the true One.

But the plain and humble Shepherds, not being disgusted at the plain and humble Appearance of the Shepherd of *Israel*, nor reasoning upon and disputing against, but humbly and reverently believing the divine Message, found both their Security and Happiness in their Simplicity; were conducted to the Fountain of Life and Salvation; and what they piously before believed, with Wonder and Adoration now beheld, the Infant God, the very Life and Joy of Heaven, cloathed with Mortality and Misery, and bathed in Tears; he whom the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, circumscribed and imprisoned in Swadling Cloaths; he who upholds all Things by the Word of his Power, himself sustained by the Arms, and nourished by the Breast of a feeble Virgin; and they of all Men had the Honour of being Christ's first Apostles, and Publishers of his Birth, as the others were of his Resurrection.

But before we go any farther, we may observe from this angelical Vision appearing to the Shepherds, and their Behaviour thereupon, that Humility and Simplicity, are, not only the proper Dispositions for receiving and admitting divine Communications, but the most certain Safe-guard and Security against Deception and Illusion; whilst the Masters in human Learning
and

and worldly Wisdom, by that Pride and Vanity with which this kind of Knowledge is apt, according to St. *Paul*, to puff up their Spirits, render themselves indisposed and unqualified for the Presence of the holy Spirit; and also by leaning too much to their own Understanding, and by judging of the divine Wisdom and Ways of acting according to the Standard of their own, do necessarily run into Errors, as often as it happens that God's Thoughts are not as their Thoughts, nor his Ways as their Ways.

It has always been the Method of divine Providence to reveal himself to the simple and unlearned: What were the Patriarchs and Prophets of old, but plain, simple, and illiterate Persons? some taken from the Herd, and others from the Plough, and the Royal Prophet himself from the Sheep-fold? and what were the Apostles of our Lord but poor Fishermen, who had neither Fortune, nor Parts, nor Time for Schools and Academies; of ^a so much Simplicity, that their blessed Lord called them Babes, and acknowledges the Wisdom of God in hiding his Mysteries from the Wise and Prudent, and revealing them unto Babes: And this has been so constant a Method with God, that from the Beginning of the World to the planting of Christianity, we can find but two remarkable Instances to the contrary: There are but two great Masters of human Learning that we read of, to whom God chose to reveal himself for the Benefit of others; and they are *Moses*, and St. *Paul*; but both so

^a Matth. ii. 25.

far removed from the usual ill Effects of it, that though perhaps none knew more of it, none valued it less, or themselves for it; insomuch that *St. Paul* in his Writings perpetually despises it, exposes it, cautions and warns Men against it as an Hindrance to receiving the Truth, and a Corrupter of Religion, as we may see in *1 Cor. i. 17, ad finem. Cap. 2. tot. Colos. ii. 8.* with many other Places too numerous to mention. And as for *Moses*, though he was skilled, as the sacred Text informs us, in all the Learning and Wisdom of the *Aegyptians*, yet so far was he from the Pedantry and Affectation of it, that there is not one Trace or Footstep of any Kind of human Learning in all his Writings; in which there is not the least Instance to be met of the Tricks and Quirks of Logick, the Fucus and Colouring of Rhetorick, the Exactitude and Finesse of Grammar and Critique; no not even of the venerable Obscurity of the Hieroglyphique, which the *Aegyptians* were so famous for conveying their Notions in: An Instance of which we have yet remaining in *Mercurius Trismegistus* an *Aegyptian* Author, Contemporary with, or as some say, older than *Moses*, who writing upon the same Subject with *Moses*, viz. of the Creation of the World, conveys his Conceptions so wrapt up in the Darkness of Hieroglyphicks, that he is almost unintelligible. Whereas the Writings of *Moses* recommend themselves, by the genuine and native Beauty of a natural and Infant-like Simplicity, perfectly resembling the Simplicity of those Infant-ages of the World, whose History he relates.

And

And one great Reason of this providential Dispensation no doubt is this, that as simple and unlearned Persons are more disposed, by Reason of their Humility, for the immediate Communication of God's holy Spirit: So they are the best qualified for transmitting to others, those Lights pure and uncorrupt, without any Mixture or Addition of human Invention: Whereas Men prepossessed and prejudiced to their own Notions and Schemes of Thinking, cannot but be apt to interpret the divine Mind according to their own; and then it is impossible but that they should mistake and corrupt the divine Truth; ^a there being a wider Difference between the Thoughts and Ways of God, and the Thoughts and Ways of Man, than there is between Heaven and Earth.

This Temper and these Qualifications are also the most infallible Security against Illusion and Deception in Matters of divine Revelation; the Wisdom, Goodness, the Truth, Honour and Justice of God are their Security; the Providence of God does in a particular Manner watch over the humble and sincere; and God can no more deceive, or suffer those who with an humble Simplicity trust and rely upon him, and him only, to be fatally and finally deceived, than he can deny himself and cease to be God. Whereas, for those who value themselves and depend upon their own Understanding and Knowledge, Caution and Prudence, it is usual, and but just for God to leave them to themselves, and then it is easy

^a *Isaiah* lv. 8, 9.

to determine their Fate; *for unless the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain: He taketh the Cunning in their own Craftiness, and bringeth to nought the Wisdom of the Prudent.* God evermore in all his Designs and Actings runs counter to the Maxims of the World, of human Prudence and carnal Reasoning; the humble and unprejudiced readily believe, and chearfully obey, and in that Belief and Obedience find their Happiness; the Worldly-wise and Learned, observing the divine Revelations to contradict their acknowledged Rules, and received Opinions, dispute, object, and at last frequently reject the Truth, out of their superstitious Caution and Fear of Error. Thus the preaching of *Christ crucified*, was to the Rabbi of the Jews, a *stumbling Block*, and to the Philosophers and wise Men among the Greeks, *Foolishness*. And St. Paul observes, *That not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were obedient to the Call of God; and that God chose the foolish Things of the World to confound the Wise, and the weak Things to confound the Mighty; because he will destroy the Wisdom of the Wise, and bring to nothing the Understanding of the Prudent.*

Thus if God reveal himself it shall be to the Simple, and Illiterate; if he have a Design to convert the World it shall be by Methods directly opposite to the Wisdom of the World; he shall not make use of the Rich and Mighty to prevail, nor of the Wise and Learned to teach, nor of the Eloquent to persuade; but he will prevail over the Mighty and Honourable
by

by weak and contemptible Persons; he will reach the Worldly-wise and Learned by the Mouth of the Simple and Illiterate, and will persuade the Eloquent by the most inartificial Plainness of Speech. Thus again, if God send his own Son into the World, it shall be in such a Manner, and in such Circumstances, as are directly contrary to the Maxims, and Opinions, and Customs, the Designs and Inclinations of the World. The Brightness and Majesty of Heaven shall be born in the meanest Obscurity upon Earth; The Lord of all Things in the lowest Degree of Poverty and Want; the Son of God, when he becomes Man, shall not be born so much as in a Place of human Abode and Habitation, but in a Receptracle of Beasts. If we seek for the Signs of the Birth of the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of *Israel*, the Angels will satisfy us, that we shall find a Babe wrapt in swadling Cloaths and laid in a Manger. Let us then in Imitation of those pious Shepherds, to whom this Revelation was first made; let us now go even to *Bethlehem* and see this Thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us; let us seriously view and consider the Place, Time, and other Circumstances of our Saviour's Birth, and see what Instruction and Advantage to our Souls we can reap from them.

Let us go to this blessed Infant, who, tho' unable to speak, yet has the Words of eternal Life; and whose Silence is more eloquent and instructive than the Tongues of Men and Angels. As the Son of God came to save Mankind

kind by reforming them, he began to exercise his Office from the first Moment of his Life. And seeing that Religion and Virtue are more effectually taught by Works than Words, and Examples are more persuasive than Precepts, our blessed Lord taught Mankind thirty Years by his Actions, and but three by his Preaching. His whole Life on Earth was a School of divine Virtue ; he is the Way as well as the Truth, whom we are as much bound to imitate as believe, whose Example is a Law ; and we are really no farther Christians than Jesus Christ is expressed in us, and our Lives are Copies of his, and we walk as he himself also walked ; and even those Periods of his Age, which seem the least fitted for Instruction and Example, by Reason of the Incapacity of his human Nature, by Reason of his Divinity are most exemplary and instructive ; the very Circumstances of his Birth were not the Effects of Chance, but Choice ; nor did they happen without his Knowledge or Consent, but were of his own Designation and Appointment ; in which, what is most useful we may consider in these three or four following Particulars.

1. The Circumstances of his Birth, his Humility, Poverty, Sufferings and Self-denial.

2. The Design in the Choice of these Circumstances.

3. Our Obligation of complying with this Design and following his Example.

4. The Manner and Way of doing this, and the Means of attaining to it.

1. For

I. For the Circumstances of his Birth we may consider his Humility, in that *the Son of God, for us Men and for our Salvation, should come down from Heaven and be made Man*; that the ever-living and ever-blessed God should cloath himself with our Mortality and Misery; that the pure and holy God should charge and load himself with our corrupt and sinful Nature; that *the Antient of Days* should be born an Infant, and that in the lowest Poverty, born of a poor though pure Virgin, in the poorest Retirement, of the poorest Village of all his Tribe and Family, and at a Time when his Family and Nation were in the lowest Condition; they had often been carried Captives into a foreign Kingdom, but now they were Slaves and Captives in their own Land.

Sufferings being the usual Attendants upon Poverty, as our blessed Saviour was born in the lowest Degree of Poverty, so his Birth was attended with the greatest Sufferings and Hardships to that most innocent and tender Body of his; born in the severest Part of the severest Season of the Year, in a cold Stable, exposed to all the Inclemencies of the Air and Elements, on the cold Ground, or at best on a Bed of Straw, himself all trembling with cold, and yet more sensibly pierced with the frozen Coldness of Men's Hearts, than with all the Rigour of the Season; in all which how great was his Self-denial, who though he was Lord and Maker of all Creatures, yet denied himself the Use and Service of all! denied himself not only the

H

Pomp

Pomp and Magnificence, not only the Comforts and Conveniencies, but even the Necessaries of Life; refused the Convenience of any human Assistance, even the Benefit of the Element of Fire, so necessary in such Circumstances in such a Season; and that which made these Circumstances of his Birth properly Self-denial, was, that they were not the random Efforts and Events of blind Chance and inevitable Fate, but were the Design and Contrivance of infinite Wisdom, such as he freely and voluntarily made Choice of before all others, when he had all others in his Power; this naturally leads us to consider,

2. Our blessed Saviour's Design in the Choice of these Circumstances of his Birth, which was the same with that of his Life and Death, *viz.* the Salvation of Mankind, by the Reformation of their Hearts and Lives. It is a great and dangerous Error, to think that all the Sufferings of the Son of God from the Manger to the Cross were purely expiatory, and designed for no other End than to procure Pardon for the Demerits of our Sins: It is an Injury to the Dignity and Majesty of our Saviour's Person, and next to the Blasphemies of *Arianism* and *Socinianism*, to imagine that so many, and such and such precise Sufferings of Christ, were absolutely necessary for the Expiation of Sin; for believe it, so infinite is the Dignity of our blessed Lord, that the least of his Sufferings had been great enough to have procured Pardon for the Sins of the whole World. The least Tear, or the least
Drop

Drop of Blood, shed by the Son of God, were enough to extinguish the Fire of God's Wrath; at least those Streams of them shed at his Death upon the Cross were sufficient to have washed away, and atoned for the Sins of the World; nay, I will venture to say farther, his Death alone would have been a Satisfaction not only for the Sins of this World, but of as many Worlds as there are sinful Creatures in this: If then the Death of the Son of God were sufficient for the Expiation of Sin, to what Purpose and for what Design were the Sufferings of his whole Life? Even for an Instruction, Example, and Law to Mankind; to shew Men by his Life how to qualify themselves for partaking of Pardon and Salvation, the Benefits purchased and merited by his Death; which blessed Benefits of his Death do belong to, and shall be conferred upon those only who shall imitate his Life; and yet we see by sad Experience, that though the least of his Sufferings had been enough for Expiation, they are all of them together little enough to procure the Imitation of Mankind; the Saviour of the World, therefore, would lose no Time, but began from the very first Moment of his Breath, that Course of Humility, Poverty, Sufferings, and Self-denial, which he continued during his Life, and only finished at his Death, on Purpose for our Instruction and Example.

St. *Paul* says, Men would not have known, that Concupiscence was a Sin, but by the Law which forbad it; so we may say, that Mankind

would never have known that the following the Inclinations of their corrupt Nature, would have led them into eternal Destruction, had it not been for the instructive Example of the Saviour of the World; who in all his Actions perpetually contradicted, mortified and overcame it; and that the Self-will of Man is evil our Lord has taught in express Words, as well as Deeds; saying, *that he came not to do his own Will, but the Will of him that sent him*; and that if *we will be his Disciples, we must also deny our selves*, and take up our Cross daily as he did; for he evermore made War in all Things against the Inclinations of corrupt Nature; for because they tend always to Greatness, and to be honoured and esteemed, he chose Meanness and Contempt; because they are always bent to covet Riches, he would be poor; and because they seek always their Ease and Pleasure, he chose Uneasiness and Sufferings. This then was the Design of our Saviour in the Choice of the Circumstances of his Birth, to shew us our Disease and direct us to a Remedy, to shew us the Corruption of our Nature and to give us an Example of denying, and overcoming it; this leads me to consider,

3. The Obligation of complying with this Design, and following his Example. That the Life of our blessed Saviour is the Rule and Standard of Virtue and Religion, all that call themselves Christians do readily allow, and as readily grant, that they are obliged to imitate him and follow his Example; but then we seem to re-

strain

strain the Imitation of him to the active Virtues, or the social Duties of Christianity, and seem to know nothing of the Obligation to imitate him in the passive Virtues, and those which tend to the Purification and inward Perfection of our Souls: We freely acknowledge we ought to follow him in his Peaceableness, Meekness, Gentleness, Goodness, Forgiveness of Injuries, Charity, &c. and I would to God we did follow him in these; but as for his Poverty, Sufferings and Self-denial, which tend to the Mortification of corrupt Nature, to the breaking of our Self-will, and reducing it to a perfect Submission and Conformity to, and Union with the Will of God, in which the Purity and Perfection of our Souls consists, we seem to have forgot that we are any Ways concerned in these, except in the Merits of them; these we make expiatory, not exemplary, to the eternal Prejudice of our Souls; but it is plain to me that the divine Wisdom of the Son of God chusing to come into the World in these Circumstances, in a Period of his Life in which he could not be an Example of active Virtue, designed purposely for our Instruction and Imitation, to be an Example of the passive; from hence then, we are taught and obliged to make War with our corrupt Nature betimes. Hence we learn, that even from our Infancy and the dawning of our Reason, we should be taught and put into the Way of nipping our Corruption in the Bud, and mortifying our Self-will and sensual Inclinations, before they become

obstinate and head-strong, so to give our Wills the right Bent while they are tender and pliable ; which if it have been neglected in our Childhood by those who should have taught us better, as God knows this Neglect is universal, to the universal Prejudice of Religion and the infinite Hazard of Men's Souls, then we are obliged to follow this Example as soon as we come to Maturity of Reason, and are able to make a Choice for our selves ; and the Obligation to the Imitation of our blessed Saviour in these Things is so great, that I am persuaded whoever neglects it, neglects his eternal Salvation. If it be thus necessary, you will no doubt be desirous to know which Way it may and should be done ; this then leads me to consider,

4. The Manner and Way of doing it, and the Means of attaining to it : And here I shall consider the Manner of imitating our Lord's Example, first in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, or the inward Conformity of the Frame and Temper of our Minds with his ; and then in our outward Actions, which are always the Expressions of our inward Dispositions. First then, that we may imitate our Saviour Jesus Christ in his Spirit, we must be really and intimately thus affected in the Bottom of our Souls *viz.* to look upon doing the Will of God as the End of our Being, to make it the ruling and governing Principle of our Life, to make it the only End and Reason of all our Thoughts, Words and Works ; never to make our selves, or any other Creature, or any Thing belonging to any Creature,

Creature, at any Time, the End of our desires, or Endeavours; but evermore to desire only, and to the utmost of our Power to endeavour that the holy Will of God may be done in us and by us, and all the rest of his Creatures in Time and to all Eternity: To this End to direct our Designs, Study, Care and Labour all the Days of our Life. Let our Condition and Abilities be what they will, never to think any Thing too little and low to do, or too much to suffer to procure the Glory of God in our selves and others; to value and esteem every Thing as it tends to promote this great End, and to despise and renounce, to abhor and execrate every Thing that is an Hindrance to it; to value and love, what by the World is so much dreaded and abhorred, even Poverty, Reproach, Contempt, and Sufferings; to reject with Hatred and Disdain, those accursed Idols of the World and our corrupt Nature, Honour and Esteem, Riches and Abundance, Ease and Pleasure, and the Gratifications of our sensual Inclinations; to value and desire nothing more of God, than that Strength and Vigour of Mind as may enable us contentedly, chearfully, and joyfully to bear the Want of all these Things; which though we cannot possess without Danger, we cannot want without Trouble; to be immutably resolved, that by the omnipotent Power of God's Grace, we will ever follow the Will of God, be it ever so ungrateful, and never our own Will, be it ever so pleasant to us. And since the Will of Man is by

Sin corrupted, and perpetually inclined to Evil, to resolve to wage perpetual War with it, to give it no Quarter, to deny it, contradict it, mortify and crucify it in every Thing. This is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of true Christianity; this Mind then must be also in us which was in Christ Jesus, who has taught us both by Word and Deed what Spirit he was of; and if we are conformable to our Saviour in our Hearts, we shall necessarily be so in our Lives; if we are like him in the inward Disposition of our Minds, we shall express it in our outward Actions.

We may then imitate the Humility of Christ in cheerfully and readily doing the lowest Offices, for any of his Members which may tend to promote the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Men, as occasion shall be offered, or need require, or our own Piety suggest; we may imitate his Refusal of worldly Pomp and Greatness, in fearing and shunning from a real Sense of our Inability, all Offices of Honour, Dignity and Trust; and if we find our selves placed in any such by looking upon them as they are before God, and in the Truth of Things, heavy Loads and Burthens to us; as being accountable to God for the Souls, Bodies, Lives, Fortunes, of all those who are committed to our Care and Government, in our respective Trusts and Employments: In which Offices we must labour out of a pure Principle of Love to God and Man, and in the Spirit of Humility and Penitence, of bearing our Part of the Burthen

Burden laid by God upon all Men in *Adam*, and as part of our daily Cross laid upon us by Jesus Christ; in these inward Sentiments, I say, we must, with incredible and indefatigable Care, watch Day and Night to discharge our Duty in those Stations, without any one sinister and self-end, without so much as casting one look to our own Honour, Glory, Profit, or Pleasure, as we shall answer it to God; whoever manages any superior Office in this Spirit will find, I will answer for him, more Occasions for Humility and Confusion, than Incentives to Pride and Vanity; more Trouble and Disquiet, than Satisfaction and Pleasure.

We may imitate our blessed Saviour in his Disregard of Honour and Esteem, by fearing and avoiding, out of an intimate Self-consciousness of our own Unworthiness, the Praises and Applauses of Men, never saying or doing any Thing with a Design to procure them; and if they happen to be offered us contrary to our desire and seeking, immediately to refund them and offer them up to God, to whom alone they do of right belong; and by bearing all Reproaches, Affronts and Injuries, in the Spirit of Humility, Meekness and Gentleness, blessing and praying for those who offer them, as being Instruments of Justice to such unworthy and contemptible Creatures as we are; and of Mercy also, in that we only meet with from the Hands of Men, that Contempt we deserve from the Hands of God. We may follow our blessed Saviour in his Poverty,

verty, if we are actually in that Condition, by bearing the Inconveniences and Hardships of it, in a Spirit of Humility, Penitence, Resignation to and Dependence upon the Will of God; in the same Spirit we should also bear all the Sufferings and Afflictions of this miserable Life, uniting them to the Poverty and Sufferings of the Son of God, and rejoicing in our Spirits, notwithstanding the Uneasiness of these States to the Flesh, that we are made thus actually conformable to the Image of the blessed Jesus, God incarnate. If we are not in a State of Poverty, we may follow and imitate the Poverty of the Son of God, in not coveting, nor desiring, nor labouring to be rich; but in following our Calling, whatsoever it be, in Humility, Penitence, and the Love of God; exercising it chearfully and diligently as part of our Burthen and daily Cross; designing and desiring nothing more from it than to fulfil the Will of God, in undergoing the Sentence originally pronounced against Sin; and providing Sustenance for our selves and Families by the Sweat of our Brows, and with an holy Indifference leave all the rest to the Disposal of Providence.

If we be rich we may imitate the Poverty of our Lord (in all Cases where the Good of Society is not concerned) by retrenching and cutting off all the Effects of Pride, Vanity, Pomp and Ostentation; all Superfluities and Excess in Buildings, Attendants, Cloaths, Furniture, Eating, Diversions, &c. and bestowing
ing

ing all that Time, Money and Care, for the Use and Benefit, the Comfort and Refreshment of the Poverty of Jesus Christ, that is, of the real poor Members of his Body; by remembering that we are but Stewards of all we possess, and by employing all but our Salary, all but Necessaries, to our Lord's Use, to the Glory of God, and the Good of Men; and woe be to us, if we either hoard up or misapply the Talent, and traffick for our own selves, for our own Pride, Vanity, and Pleasure, with our Lord's Money; and holding our selves in a Readiness to give up our Accounts with Joy, whenever our great Lord shall call us to give an Account of, or taketh away our Stewardship from us, and either deprive us by Death, or by reducing us to Poverty.

Lastly, and to conclude, we may imitate the Self denial of our Lord, in keeping a strict and perpetual Guard over all the Inclinations of corrupt Nature: Let us stifle their Desires in the Birth, bridle our headstrong and unruly Self-will, mortify it in every one of the Senses; let us give our sensual Appetites nothing but what we cannot help; what is strictly and absolutely necessary for Life and Health, and no more; and if through the Feebleness and Frailty of our Nature we chance sometimes a little to give way to them, let us not faint and be discouraged, let us not yield the Field to them, let us not make Peace or even Truce with them; but let us renew our Resolutions and Endeavours, our Desires and Applications to the Son of God,
for

for a greater Degree of that divine Strength of his by which he overcame the World, to fight his Battels against his and our most dangerous Enemies; for this is the Means to attain to this Imitation of our Lord, ever to look upon his Pattern, and to look up to him for Assistance; evermore to set before our Eyes his Example; and evermore most ardently to pray to him to be filled with his Spirit.



SERMON



SERMON VI.

I P E T. II. 21.

*Hereunto were ye called; because Christ
also suffered for us, leaving us an
Example that ye should follow his
Steps.*



THAT which the Apostle refers to
in this Verse, and unto which he
says all Christians are called, is suf-
fering; and that, the hardest and
most difficult; suffering wrongfu-
ly and unjustly; and that too, in Cases where we
do not only deserve no Blame or Punishment,
but even deserve Commendation and Reward.

To do Good, and to suffer Evil, is the pro-
per Character, Business, and Profession of a
Christian;

PRO SERMONS *on*

Christian ; to this we are called and obliged not only by the exprefs Rules and Orders of our Institution, but also by the Pattern and Example of our great Master and Founder the blessed Jesus, whose Disciples we falsely and hypocritically pretend to be, unless we *follow his Steps*, unless as *he himself walked*, so we also *walk*^a; and *with whom*, unless we suffer here, we vainly hope to ^b *be glorified* hereafter. *This*, says the Apostle, *ver. 19. of this Chapter, ^c This is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conscience toward God endure Grief, Suffering wrongfully; for what Glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your Faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called: Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that ye should follow his Steps.*

Now if we are obliged by the Terms of our Christianity to suffer with Patience the Evils which are inflicted on us by the Injustice or Cruelty of Men; how much stronger Obligations do we lye under chearfully to undergo those Sufferings, which are dispensed to us by the Justice and Mercy of God?

I shall not confine my self to the precise Circumstances of the Text, but consider the Words according to the general and universal Truth contained in them, *viz.* that a Christian Life is

^a 1 John ii. 6. ^b Rom. viii. 17. ^c 1 Pet. ii. 19, 20, 21.

a State of Suffering, that Jesus Christ, *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*, did, among other Reasons, suffer expressly for this Purpose, to be an Example and Pattern of Suffering to all his Disciples and Followers; *for even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example that ye should follow his Steps.*

I shall therefore consider these Words as containing,

I. The Reason and End of the Sufferings of Christ. *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an Example.*

II. The Obligation that lies upon all without Exception, to answer this End, and comply with this Design; *for hereunto were we called; that we should follow his Steps.*

III. I shall endeavour to shew you the Manner and Way of imitating and following his Example.

I. Then I shall consider the Reason and End of the Sufferings of Christ, expressed in these Words, *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an Example.*

That the Son of God for us Men and for our Salvation came down from Heaven, and was made Man, and was crucified also for us, are Truths which are indeed universally acknowledged, but little understood and less complied with by the generality of Christians; although they are the very first Principles and Elements of Christianity.

There

There are some, though few in Comparison, who by denying the Divinity of our Saviour's Person, and consequently taking away the infinite Dignity and Merits of his Sufferings, which they hold to be merely exemplary, do really make his Sacrifice insufficient for the Salvation of Mankind.

Again there are others, and they too numerous every where, even in a Manner the whole Body of those who call themselves Christians, who looking only upon the infinite Merits and Dignity of the Person of the Son of God, and the Expiation and Propitiation of his Sacrifice, either know nothing of, or at least do not conform themselves to the Example of his Sufferings; expecting, and presumptuously relying upon it, that they shall be saved by his Death, although they are not *conformable* to it: Whereas it is most evident from the positive Institution of God, from the Design of Christ, and from the Nature of the Thing itself, that they who would partake of the Benefit of Christ's Sufferings, must also partake of his Sufferings; they who would *enter into his Kingdom and Glory*, must pass the same Way that he did, must *drink of his Cup, and be baptized with his Baptism*; they that would *live with Christ*, must also *die with him*; they that would *reign with him*, must also *suffer with him*; they that would obtain the End, must of Necessity use the Means.

Now to remedy these two most pernicious and damnable Errors, and to shew you clearly the whole Plan and Design of our blessed Saviour's Sufferings,

Sufferings, it will be proper to consider these two Points.

1. That a bare Example of Suffering, without infinite Merit, would not have been sufficient for the Purposes of Salvation.

2. That even infinite Merit, without such an Example of Suffering as we have in the blessed JESUS, would not have been effectual to that Purpose.

But that we may proceed more clearly, let us first consider what the Nature of that Salvation is, to obtain which we affirm these Things to be necessary.

Salvation in a large Sense signifies not only the Deliverance from the greatest Evil, but also the Possession and Enjoyment of the greatest Good.

Now it is beyond Contradiction, that Man, when he was first created, was in a State of Salvation; I do not mean that he was only in a Capacity and Possibility of attaining it, but that he was in actual Possession and Enjoyment of it; that is, he was created in a State of Glory and Perfection both of Body and Soul; which, if he had not sinned, he would have augmented and encreased, not only during the Time of his Trial, but after that had been over, to all Eternity. So that the State to which he would have arrived, after having run his Course without falling, would not have been a Change and Difference in Condition (as it will be with us, from Mortality, Misery, and Corruption, to Glory, Honour, and Im-

I

mortality)

mortality) but it would have been the same State in Substance in which he was created; only different in Degrees, Firmness and Stability; and blessed with the Grace of final Perseverance, and guarded and secured by the omnipotent Power of God from ever falling.

This State of Glory and Happiness consisted; as to its inferior and less principal Part, in the Perfection of the inferior and less principal Part of Man, the Body and animal Faculties; and in the Entertainment of them with the Beauty, Sweetness, Goodness, and Glory of the Creatures and Works of God.

And as to the principal and essential Part of his Happiness, with Relation to the nobler and divine Part of Man, his Soul; it consisted in the Enjoyment of God himself; in the mutual and reciprocal Entertainments between God and the Soul of Man; in the Communications of Light, and Love, and Joy from God to the Soul; and in the Returns of Admiration, Adoration, Love, Gratitude and Praise from the Soul to God, for his infinite and immense Glories, Beauties, Excellencies and Perfections. These Returns of Love and Duty God would have blessed and rewarded with new, larger, and more delightful Discoveries and Manifestations of his divine Nature to the Soul, which would still have produced fresh and greater Returns of Gratitude and Love in the Soul to God. And in this blessed and delightful Circle of Happiness would Man have gone on (had he continued faithful) in the continual and mutual

mutual Encrease of Favour and Love on God's Part, and of Duty and Happiness on Man's, till he had arrived at the Period appointed by God for his Trial and Probation; and then, as I just now observed, God would have crowned his Fidelity with the Grace of Perseverance, and put him out of all Possibility of falling.

But Man did not long continue in this blessed State, but fixing his Regard too long, and placing his Affections too much upon the Creature, and neglecting thereupon the Intercourse of his Soul with God; he did by Degrees so separate and alienate himself from God, and so fasten and rivet his Heart and Soul to the Creatures, that at last he came to downright Rebellion against his Sovereign Lord, proudly and ungratefully opposing and contradicting the Will of God, and disobeying his Commands.

From that Moment God, who before had withdrawn his gracious Presence and Influence gradually and in Proportion, as Man withdrew his Heart from God; from that fatal Moment, I say, in which Man's Sin was compleated, God did absolutely and utterly forsake him; from that Moment all Communications of Light, and Love, and Joy, were entirely stop'd and cut off; and from that Moment Man fell, by a necessary Consequence, into the most dreadful and amazing Darkness, Confusion, Terror, Horror, Anxiety, and Misery; and had it not been for the Intervention and Interposition of the Mediator, the adorable Son of God, he must presently have fallen into the Rage, Hatred,

tred, Despair, and Blasphemy of Hell, and become an incarnate Devil.

Now from this Account it is plain,

1st, That Salvation, that is the supreme Happiness, consisting, as to its most essential and substantial Part, in the mutual and reciprocal Intercourse between God and Man, in the immediate Action and Operation of God upon, and Communication of himself to the Soul, and in the Return of Love and Duty from the Soul to God : I say, it is evident, that this State once lost, must be recovered and re-established again (if it be to be done at all) by the mutual Concurrence and Co-operation of both God and Man, by the Return of Man to his Duty and Obedience, and by the Return of God to his former Favour and Kindness.

2^{dly}, It is plain that Man, after his Sin, had neither Inclination nor Ability, neither Will nor Power of himself to return to God, so to furnish the absolutely necessary and indispensable Condition on his Part towards Salvation.

3^{dly}, It is plain that the infinite and adorable Majesty of Heaven being outrageously abused, affronted and injured, and having thereupon justly withdrawn himself, could not in Justice (without Satisfaction made, and his Honour vindicated and repaired, and without the Return of Man with most humble Sorrow and Submission,) ever have come to offer and present the heavenly Treasures of his Light and Love, and give and communicate himself to
rebellious

rebellious Man; for this would have been in the highest Sense to have *cast Pearls before Swine*, and to have *given that which is holy unto Dogs*; and knowingly and willingly to have prostituted and exposed his Majesty and Glory, to the Contempt and Insults of the most contemptible and worthless Creature.

4^{thly}, Hence it is plain, that if ever there should be any Prospect of Reconciliation and Agreement between God and Man, there must, before any Overtures of Mercy and Forgiveness on the Part of God, and of Repentance and Submission on the Part of Man, such an Expedient be found out as may at once be sufficient to satisfy the divine Justice, and to move and incline the Mercy of God towards Man; and also to remove the Obstacles, the Indignity and Indisposition of Man, and to move and incline his Heart to Repentance towards God.

5^{thly}, From hence it undeniably follows, that no one is qualified for, or capable of the Office of Mediator between Man and God, and of an Intercessor for and Redeemer of Man; but a Person of infinite Dignity and Merit, of infinite Goodness, Wisdom, and Power.

He must be of infinite Dignity and Merit, to make what he shall do or suffer, in his Character and Office of Mediator and Redeemer, of sufficient Worth and Value to the Purposes of Reconciliation, Redemption, and Salvation.

For it is the intrinsic Worth, Dignity and Excellency of the Person, that adds Merit to his Actions or Sufferings; not the Actions and Sufferings that add Merit to the Person: It was the infinite Dignity of the Son of God, who is God by Nature, that made his Sufferings infinitely meritorious, not the Sufferings that made the Son of God to be of infinite Dignity and Merit.

The Mediator then must be a Person of infinite Dignity and Worth, to communicate such a Value to his Actions and Sufferings, as shall be sufficient to satisfy the Justice of the offended infinite Majesty, and to make his Intercession of such infinite Consideration, as to move and incline the Mercy of God to so ungrateful and unworthy an Object as sinful Man.

Again, the Mediator must be of infinite Goodness to undertake such an Office, and of infinite Wisdom and Power to effect the Work of Salvation; to know how, and be able to remove all the Obstacles and Indispositions in the Soul of Man, which hinder him from returning and submitting to his God, and to do for him from time to time all Things necessary both outwardly and inwardly, in order to fit and prepare him for Salvation, and the blissful Sight and Enjoyment of God. Again,

6thly, Hence it follows that though one of sufficient, that is of infinite Merit, should undertake to do or suffer any Thing, in Consideration of which the divine Justice could not but be satisfied, and the Indignity of Man thereby
be

be removed, and his Guilt pardoned; and consequently the Goodness of God moved and inclined to communicate himself to Man again, without any Prejudice to his Honour and Justice: Yet to bring about the Salvation of Man, after the Obstacles removed on God's Part, the Obstacles on Man's Part also must be removed, by which Man is not only hindered and detained from returning to God with Repentance and Submission; but God is also hindered from operating upon, and communicating himself to the Soul of Man, in such Manner and Degree as is necessary for his Salvation and Happiness, not from any Indignity and Demerit in Man which is now supposed to be removed by the Merits and Dignity of the Redeemer, but from the Indisposition of Man's Faculties, whereby he is not yet fit for, nor capable of receiving and admitting those Communications in their full Extent and Force.

These Obstacles are chiefly *Darkness* and Ignorance in the *Understanding*, whereby he neither knew God nor himself, neither his Happiness nor his Duty; and *Obliquity* and Perverseness in his *Will*, whereby he was opposite and contrary, and an Enemy to God, violently bent and addicted to himself and to his own Will, Pleasure and Glory, and to all Things which flattered his Pride, Vanity and Self-love, Things which fomented and heightened his Disease, his Sin and Misery; and as extremely averse to the Methods absolutely necessary to his Recovery, and Cure, to the rectifying the

Obliquity of his Will, and reducing it again to a Conformity to, and Union with the Will of God, such Things as humbled his Pride, mortified his Vanity, and shocked his Self-love. These Obstacles and Indispositions in the Soul of Man, do not only hinder him from furnishing the Condition requisite on his Part, *viz.* of returning to God with humble Contrition; but they also incapacitate him for admitting the divine Communications in such a Manner and Measure as is necessary for the Perfection of Happiness, because the Soul is not able to bear them till these Obstacles are removed; and if God should act in that Manner upon a Soul so indisposed, it would be so far from being delightful and beautifying, that it would be the most desolating and afflicting Thing to it imaginable; not from the Nature of the divine Operation, but from the Weakness and Indisposition of the Subject. As in this material World, the Light of the Sun, which is to sound and strong Eyes one of the most pleasant, chearful and delightful Things in Nature, is nevertheless to weak and tender Eyes most afflicting and tormenting.

Now to remove and remedy these Obstacles and Indispositions of Man towards the Recovery of his Happiness, *viz.* the Darkness in his Understanding, and the Perverseness of his Will and Affections, it was necessary that he should have Light and Knowledge communicated to his Understanding, in order to be sensible of his Error, and see the Way to recover himself

himself out of it, and that he should have right Movements impressed upon his Will and Affections in order to incline him freely and willingly to return, and with Humility, Shame and Sorrow, to throw himself at the Feet of his offended God and Father, to implore Mercy and Forgiveness, which is the first Step towards his Recovery; and then it would be necessary to have both Inclination and Strength communicated to him, chearfully and readily to submit to and undergo those Methods and Operations which the divine Physician of our Souls shall see necessary, in order to make a perfect and compleat Cure of them; and to restore them to their original Purity and Integrity, whereby they will be fitted for Communion and Union with God again, and be enabled to admit and bear, with inexpressible and inconceivable Delight, those Emanations and Impressions of Light and Love from the supreme Spirit, in which the vital and essential Happiness of all spiritual Natures, of Angels and Men, must consist.

To effect all this and bring it about, the adorable Creator vouchsafes to become the Mediator and Redeemer of Mankind. He takes human Nature upon him, and comes to Men to teach them the Way to return to God. The divine and infallible Physician puts himself into the Case of his Patients, prescribes proper Remedies for them, communicates infallible Virtue and Efficacy to these Remedies, and to shew the Power of them and the Necessity of taking them, notwithstanding

ing their Harshness he takes them himself, drinks off the bitter Cup even to the very Dregs, and thereby restores corruptible, miserable, mortal Nature to its original *Glory, Honour and Immortality*; in his own Person first, and afterwards in all them that will obey him and follow his Example.

○ The adorable Son of God, and God the Son, in order to redeem and restore human Nature, takes human Nature upon him, and *for us Men and for our Salvation* becomes Man, offers up himself a Sacrifice of Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World; satisfies his offended Father's Justice, atones for our Guilt and Demerit, and makes a Reconciliation between Heaven and Earth, between God and Man; in Virtue of this infinitely meritorious Sacrifice, God takes Man into Favour again, and is willing on his Part to give and communicate himself to Man again, and to restore him to the Glory and Happiness both of Soul and Body, in which he at first created him, and from which *Adam* by Transgression fell, and in *Adam* all Mankind.

But there being a mutual Concurrence necessary to make that mutual Love between God and Man, in which the Happiness of Man consists; and there being many Obstacles and Indispositions in the Soul of Man, which hindered him from furnishing the Conditions requisite on his Part, such as Darkness and Blindness in his Understanding, Crookedness and Perverseness in his Will, a strong Inclination

nation to the Creatures, and as strong an Aversion from God: To remove and remedy these, the Son of God, and Saviour of Mankind, who is God as well as Man, who is *the true Light which lighteneth every Man that cometh into the World*; darts a Ray of divine Light into the Souls of Men, discovering to them, and convincing them of the horrid Nature of Sin and Guilt; and accompanying this Light with the Motions of his holy Spirit upon their Hearts; he kindly and gently, yet pressingly, moves and incites them to return to God by true Contrition and Repentance, and taking Shame and Confusion to themselves, to humble themselves before the Throne of Grace, and sue for Mercy; and freely and willingly to offer themselves wholly up to God, to do and suffer whatever his divine Wisdom, Justice and Goodness shall see necessary for the vindicating his Honour, and for the restoring of them to their primitive Glory and Happiness.

And lest the Disagreeableness of the Methods necessary to Man's perfect Recovery should make Men unwilling to acknowledge and submit to, and go through with them, the Son of God becomes Man to teach Men the Way to Salvation by his holy and heavenly Doctrine and Life, and to shew them the Necessity of it, to engage and oblige them to follow it by the Example of his Sufferings and Death; and also merits both Virtue and Efficacy for these Means, and Grace and Strength for Men to make use of them,

And

And the Way to Salvation which our blessed Lord has shewn Mankind by his Doctrine, his Life and Death, is the Way of the *Cross* and *Suffering*, the Way of *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, as being the only Way to purge and purify our corrupted Nature, to break our Self-will, and reduce it to a perfect Submission and Conformity to, and Union with the divine Will, in which the Purity and Perfection of our Souls consists: And that the Self-will of Man is since his Sin wholly corrupt and evil, and that it therefore must be mortified and extinguished, our blessed Lord has taught us in expresse Words as well as Deeds; for he tells us, that even he himself *came not to do his OWN WILL, but the Will of HIM that sent him*; and that if we will be his Disciples we must also *deny our selves, and take up our Cross daily*, as he did, *and follow him*, who continually made "War against the Inclinations of corrupt Nature in all things; for, because they always tend to Greatness, to be honoured and esteemed, he chose Meanness, Contempt and Reproach; because they are always bent to covet Riches, and Abundance in all Things, he chose Poverty and Want; and because they seek always their Ease and Pleasure, he chose a Life of Hardships and Sufferings.

Now had it not been for the exemplary and infinitely meritorious Sufferings of the Son of God, Men would either have not known and believed that Suffering was the Way to Glo-

ry, Misery the Road to Happiness, and Death the Gate to Life ; or if they had known this they would not have had the Courage and Strength to have undertaken and gone through with it, had not *the Captain of our Salvation* led the way himself, and merited and obtained Grace and Strength for us to follow him. But further, supposing Mankind had known and believed Suffering to be the Way to Salvation, and had been both willing and able to have gone thro' it, yet without the infinitely meritorious Sufferings of the Son of God, it could not have conducted them to Salvation : For Sufferings are salutary and saving, not in their *own Nature*, but by *Grace*. All their Virtue and Efficacy towards purifying and sanctifying our Souls proceeds from the Tincture of the most precious Blood of the Son of God, with which they are impregnated. It is only the infinite Merits of the Sufferings of the Head, extended and communicated to the Members, which makes their Sufferings become instrumental to their Purification and Sanctification. Had it not been for the infinite Merits of the Redeemer, Men might and would have suffered to Eternity, without being any ways bettered by their Sufferings. Thus for want of a Mediator the Sufferings and Torments of the Devils are so far from being instrumental to their becoming better, that they are the Occasion of their growing worse and worse ; and as their Sufferings increase so does their Malice and Wickedness.

From

From this large and plain Deduction, the two Points I mentioned at the Entrance upon the first Head will be clear and evident.

1. That a bare Example of suffering without infinite Merit could not have been sufficient for the Purposes of Salvation ; and

2. That even infinite Merit, without such an Example of suffering, as we have in the blessed Jesus, would not have been effectual to that Purpose, as a very short Application of what has been said to these two Points will make appear.

1. For first, it is plain from the foregoing Account, that a bare Example of suffering without infinite Merit would not have been sufficient to satisfy infinite Justice, nor to atone for the Guilt and Demerit of Sin, that is, of offending, injuring and affronting infinite Majesty, nor to have effectually moved and inclined God to Reconciliation, and to have taken Man into Favour again : Nor would a bare Example have been sufficient to have merited a Blessing upon the Means of suffering, nor have merited Grace and Strength for Man to have made the proper use of that Means.

2. Secondly, it is plain from the foregoing Account, that neither would even infinite Merit, without such an Example of suffering as we have in the blessed Jesus, have been effectual to Salvation. For since our Nature is corrupted by Sin, and unless it be purified from that Corruption it is impossible for us to be united to the pure and holy God; in which Union the essential Happiness of our Souls consists ; and since

since it is impossible to be cleansed from this Corruption of our Nature, but by perpetually mortifying and denying it, and dying to it; and since this contradicting, mortifying and extinguishing our Self-will cannot be brought about without great Uneasiness and Suffering; and since suffering of Things contrary to our Will and Inclination with Humility, Meekness and perfect Submission and Resignation to the Will of God, is the only Way to bring our Wills to an intire Conformity to, and Union with the Will of God: Hence it follows, that Men must be taught and obliged, and effectually engaged and animated to enter into and pursue the Way of the Cross, and suffering, as being the only Way to eternal Life. But this could never be done without the actual Example of the Saviour of Mankind, going before Men in the Way of Salvation; which Example would at once shew Men the right and only Way; and also shew them the Possibility and Necessity of passing thro' it.

Thus I hope I have made out the first Thing I proposed from the Words of my Text, *viz.*

I. The Reason and End of the Sufferings of Christ, who, as the Apostle says, *suffered for us, leaving us an Example that we should follow his Steps.*

I should now have proceeded to the second Particular, *viz.*

II. The Obligation that lies upon all without Exception to comply with this Design, and

to follow this Example. *For hereunto were ye called, that we should follow his Steps ; and*

III. To endeavour to shew you the Way and Manner of imitating his Example.

But I must reserve it for another Opportunity.

I shall only add at present, That as we are going now solemnly to celebrate the Memorial of this infinitely meritorious Sacrifice of the Son of God, we should look upon this holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, as it truly is, a Symbol and Figure of the Communion which all true Christians *must* have in the Sufferings of Christ, and also as a Means of conveying that Grace and Strength to *partake of Christ's Sufferings, and to be made conformable to his Death*, which he purchased and merited for us.

Therefore, my Brethren, as we would not profane this holy Mystery, as we would not be *guilty of our Lord's Body*, nor tread under Foot the most precious and sacred Blood of the Son of God, let us here at his holy Altar, in Virtue of, and in Union with his most infinitely meritorious Sacrifice upon the Cross, offer up our selves also, our Souls, Bodies and Spirits, and all that we have and are, with the full and free Consent of our Wills and Hearts, a Sacrifice to the divine Will, Pleasure and Glory, to suffer and to do whatsoever God would have us to suffer and to do ; and let us in the Virtue and Merits of Christ's all-sufficient Sacrifice implore the Assistance of the holy Spirit, that

he

he would give us, and work in us the Grace and Strength evermore to conform and unite our Wills to the Will of God in all our Actions and all our Sufferings. I shall conclude with the Collect of our Church.

Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a Sacrifice for Sin, and also an Example of godly Life; give us Grace, that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable Benefit, and also daily endeavour our selves to follow the Steps of his most holy Life, thro' the same Jesus Christ our Lord, &c.



K

SERMON



SERMON VII.

I P E T. II. 21.

Hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example that ye should follow his Steps.



FROM these Words I proposed to do these three Things.

I. To consider the Reason and End of the sufferings of Christ. *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an Example.*

II. The Obligation that lies upon all, without Exception, to answer this End, and comply with this Design, *for hereunto were we called, that we should follow his Steps.*

III. To

III. To endeavour to shew you the Manner and Way of imitating and following his Example.

The first I handled in a former Discourse, and come now,

II. To shew the Obligation that lies upon all without Exception, to answer the End, and comply with the Design of our blessed Lord in suffering for us, which was to be a Pattern and Example to us, *for hereunto were we called, that we should follow his Steps.*

The Text says expressly, that *Christ suffered for us on purpose to leave us an Example, that we should imitate him and follow his Steps*, and that *we were called to this*, when we were called to Christianity; and that it is the proper Vocation and Business of a Christian to follow his Lord and Master Jesus Christ in Suffering.

And it is not only the express Declaration of the Text, but it is in a Manner the Tenor and Substance of the whole Gospel. How frequently is it urged, how perpetually inculcated, that *we must deny our selves, renounce and forsake all Things and follow Christ?* that we must be always ready and prepared freely and chearfully to part with all that Mankind hold most dear, Friends, Relations, Liberty, Lives and Fortunes, whenever God calls for them.

We are taught that we must receive our Religion upon these very Terms, and enter into

Christianity with this View and Prospect, we are forewarned of it, and forearmed against it. If we earnestly desire, and seriously and stedfastly resolve to give up the ruined and decayed Temple of our Souls into the Hands of the supreme Architect and *Master-Builder of all Things*, to have it repaired and rebuilt, for an *Habitation of God thro' the Spirit*: We are taught to sit down first and consider whether we shall be able to go through with the Work and finish it: We are taught to expect the Floods of Calamity, and the Storms and Tempests of Adversity, and therefore are warned to consider, whether we shall have Courage and Strength enough to stand the Shock; and are advised to build upon a sure and strong Foundation, not upon the sandy and moveable Foundation of human Weakness, but upon the *Rock of Ages*, the omnipotent and immutable Strength of God.

Is not the *Way of Life* said to be *narrow*, and the Entrance into it *strait*, and that therefore we must *strive* and press hard, and be at great Pains to enter into, and walk in it? Is not a Christian's Life compared to a perpetual State of Warfare, and for that Reason the Church on Earth, stiled the Church Militant, and our three great Enemies, the World, the Flesh and the Devil, are they not very near us, do they not *compass us about on every Side*, and lay close Siege against us? Nay, are they not some of them within us, and have they not a strong Party there? Therefore it is, undoubtedly,

doubtedly, that we are so frequently warn'd in Scripture to be perpetually upon our Guard, to watch continually, to put on the whole Armour of God, that we may be able to stand all the Assaults of our Enemies, and to fight the good Fight of Faith.

Nay, the Scripture goes so far as to call the forewarning Christians of the Sufferings they are to expect, and encouraging them to bear them like Christians; this, I say, the Scripture calls strengthening and confirming their Souls; for so we are told, *Acts xiv. 22.* that the Apostles went about confirming the Souls of the Disciples, by exhorting them to continue in the Faith, and by telling them that we must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.

And lest any one should think that these are only general Sayings, which like general Rules, are always liable to Exceptions, and so should flatter himself with an Exemption, the Scripture expressly declares, that *ALL that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. And it is observed in the Gospel, that our blessed Saviour made this the unalterable Condition for all, and every one, without Exception, that will be his Disciple, *Luke ix. 23.* And he said to them *ALL, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross DAILY, and follow me.*

Faithful Soldiers must follow where their Captain leads; and if the Captain of our Sal-

vation was made perfect through suffering, we must follow him, and walk in the same Way that he went, if we would go to the same place whither he is gone; *we must suffer with him, if we would reign with him.*

There is a natural and necessary Connexion between the State of the Head and of the Members; and if it were possible, yet it would be very unnatural and indecent, for the rest of the Members to riot in Pleasure whilst the Head is in Pain, and to be gay and rejoyce while the Head is in Mourning and Sorrow. *Pudeat*, says a pious Father, *pudeat membra sectari gloriam, quibus caput suum tam inglorium exhibetur. Pudeat sub spinato capite, membrum fieri delicatum.* It is a Shame for the Members to affect Honour whose Head was so publicly dishonoured; it is a Shame for a Member to indulge Ease and Delicacy under a Head crowned with Thorns. But the great Obligation that lies upon us from Christianity, is not barely to suffer, for that we are born to and cannot avoid, and must undergo whether we will or no; no Time, no Place, no Condition or State of Life can plead an Exemption from, or promise a Security against it: The great Obligation then that lies upon us from Christianity is not so much to suffer, as to imitate and follow Christ in his Sufferings, *to suffer with Christ*, and as Christ did, to be animated with the same Spirit, and to have the same in-

St. Bernard.

ward

ward Disposition and outward Behaviour in our Sufferings as Christ had in his; not to suffer barely as Men, or even as Philosophers, but as Christians; which leads me to the,

III. Third Thing proposed, *viz.* to endeavour to shew you the Manner and Way of imitating and following our blessed Lord's Example in suffering, and that in these two Respects.

1. In Respect of the *Kinds* of Sufferings.

2. In Respect of the *Manner* or Way of bearing them.

1. First, I am to shew in what *Kind* or Sort of Sufferings we are to imitate and follow the Example of our blessed Lord.

And these are chiefly all those Sufferings, whether outward or inward, bodily or spiritual, which befall us in the Order of God and the Course of his Providence, which are of God's choosing and Appointment, and not our own; and proceed originally from God's Will, not our own; not such as we voluntarily procure to, and inflict upon our selves, but such as God sends us and orders for us.

Not that there is any need in this Age wherein we live, of a Bridle to restrain the too eager and fervent Zeal for Mortification. There is no great Danger, I think, of Mens macerating and emaciating their Bodies, or of starving themselves to Death with Fasting and Abstinence. We are run into the contrary Extreme, of spiritual Sloth, and Indulgence of our Appetites to the full, to the utmost of our Power:

So that we have need of a Spur to quicken us to use the Mortification that is absolutely necessary, not of a Curb to hold us in from running into useless and dangerous Austerities. Therefore all voluntary Acts of Mortification and Self denial, which flow from a pious Zeal and *Fervency of Spirit*, tempered with Prudence, and which serve to keep under the Body, and to bring it into Subjection, and to make the Flesh obedient to the Spirit, are not discountenanced but encouraged, not condemned but commended, not forbidden but commanded by our Lord's Example. But those Austerities and Rigours which are either rash and imprudent, or vain and ostentatious, which injure the Body and do not advantage the Spirit, which indulge and foment *spiritual Sins*, whilst they mortify and repress *carnal* ones, which make the Spirit proud, while they humble the Flesh: These, doubtless, are not the Sufferings we are to undergo, in order to imitate and follow the Example of our suffering Lord.

It is sufficient, after the Mortification of our corrupt Appetites and Affections is secured, to bear after the Example and in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, those Sufferings which the Providence of God allots us, such as Neglect, Contempt, Calumny, Reproach, Affronts, Injuries, Sickness, Poverty, Destitution both outward and inward, the Loss of Friends, Relations, Fortune, Liberty and Life. And besides these greater though less frequent Sufferings, we should bring into the Account the lesser, but much more common,

common, and almost continual Troubles of Life, the Uneasiness we suffer from the Elements, and Unseasonableness or Extremity of the Weather, the daily Fatigues of our daily Labour in our several Callings, the Disturbance and Contradiction we meet with from the contrary and disagreeable Humours and Tempers of those we have to deal with, and are always about us. These Sufferings, I say, we are to follow and imitate our Lord in; for of this Sort were the Sufferings of the blessed Jesus, and none of his own procuring.

Though if it should so happen, that thro' our Imprudence or mistaken Zeal, or even through our Faults and Follies, any great Affliction should befall us, we then are to look upon it in the Effect, though not in the Cause, as the Will of God concerning us, and are to bear it as we ought to do any other Cross that Providence, without our Concurrence, lays upon us.

And there is all the Reason in the World why we should leave our Sufferings to God's Choice, and not trust them to our own; because whenever we choose for our selves we choose like Fools, and when we pretend to cut out Crosses for our selves, we only shew that we are meer Bunglers at that Work; we often make our Application to a Part that is not affected, or use a Remedy that belongs to another Disease; we scarrify the Skin, when the Distemper lies at the Heart, and when we should be humbling the Spirit are mortifying the

the Body; but if we would put the Work into the Hands of a Master that Way, let us leave it to the Choice of our blessed Lord, whose infinite Knowledge and unerring Wisdom enables him to fit a Cross exactly to our Size and Dimensions, and to proportion its Weight to our Strength; who best knows when and how to suit the Kinds and Degrees, the particular Circumstances, the Continuance and Intervals of Sufferings, to the Needs and Necessities of every particular Person; like a divine Physician who knows a specifick Remedy not only for every Disease, but for the particular Symptoms of each particular Person's Habit and Constitution. Come we now,

2^{dly}, To shew you how we should imitate the Example, and *follow the Steps* of our blessed Saviour in the *Manner* and Way of bearing Sufferings.

And here we ought to endeavour after,

- 1.) The like End and Design,
- 2.) The like Spirit, or inward Disposition and outward Behaviour, which the blessed Jesus had in his Sufferings.

1.) We should endeavour to have the like End and Design in our Sufferings which our blessed Saviour had in his.

Objection, But here it may be said, that all providential Sufferings are inflicted upon us without our Concurrence and Consent, and whether we will or no; and for that Reason there is no Place for an End or Intention on our Part, which are only Motives and Reasons for

for voluntary Actions and Things of Choice ; that God indeed who wills, chooses and ordains these Afflictions for us, may properly be said to have an End and Design in them, not we who are passive in the Case, and only suffer them.

Answer, To this I answer : It is true, that there can be no End and Design without a free and voluntary Action of the Will ; and that therefore this is what every one ought to make in all suffering, *viz.* willingly to accept it, and freely and voluntarily to offer up himself to God to bear the Affliction he sends ; by which Means he partakes both of the Act and Design of God ; his suffering becomes thereby voluntary and chosen, and is his own Act and Deed.

And without this there is no Way of making our Sufferings acceptable to God, or beneficial to our selves ; and for want of doing thus, we suffer rather like Beasts than Men, like Heathens, not like Christians. We trifle and sling away the fairest and best Opportunities that God puts into our Hands *for working out our Salvation*, for purifying, sanctifying and saving our Souls ; we lose infinite Treasures of Grace here, and glorious Rewards hereafter ; and what is still worse, our Pains are not only thrown away, but those very Miseries of this Life, which if rightly used, would have been instrumental in procuring us eternal Happiness, will, by our criminal Neglect, serve only to heighten our eternal Torments.

It is, therefore, one of the most useful and excellent Arts in the Christian and spiritual Life, to know how to *make a Virtue of Necessity*; by chusing our selves what God has chosen for us, by uniting our Wills to his, and making, by Acceptance, his Actions our own.

In which Case, *St. Paul* has left us an excellent Instruction and Example, *1 Cor. ix. 16, 17.* where he says, *Necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel. But, if I do this Thing willingly (notwithstanding the Necessity laid upon me) I have a Reward.* Thus in all our Afflictions there is a Necessity laid upon us, and suffer we must whether we will or no, and yet notwithstanding, *if we do it willingly we shall have a Reward.* Thus by freely and voluntarily accepting all that God sends, we do by our own Choice make that which was necessary become voluntary, and that which is forced upon us to become Matter of Virtue and Reward.

Since then we may and ought to make our providential Sufferings voluntary, we may and ought to have an End and Design in them; an End, conformable to the End which the blessed Jesus had in his Sufferings, and which he has in sending ours to us.

Now the End and Design which our blessed Lord had in his Sufferings, was, as the Scripture in general informs us, and my Text in particular, and as I proved at large in a former Discourse, not only to be a Sacrifice for Sin, but to give us an Example that we should follow

low his Steps; to shew Men the Way that leads to Holiness and Happiness, to oblige them and animate them by his Example to walk in it, and to merit Grace for Sufferings to become instrumental to our Purification and Salvation, and Strength for us to bear them and make use of them to that End. And Suffering is so necessary a Means for Sinners to arrive at Sanctification and Salvation, that the holy Scriptures intimate the *Expediency* at least, if not the *Necessity* of them, even for the personal Advantage of the Son of God himself when he became Man, and *was made in the Likeness of sinful Flesh*.

It is true, he was to suffer, though he was no Sinner himself, as he personated and sustained the Character of Sinners. As he took upon him the Nature and the Guilt, though not the Sin of Mankind, so he was to suffer the Punishment as if he had deserved it, though he did not deserve it; but they who had sinned and for whose Sins he suffered, but who could not by their own Sufferings expiate and atone for their own Sins.

It is true also, our blessed Saviour was to suffer as the Head and Leader, the Model and Pattern for all them that were to come to God and be saved by him; who were to imitate him and *follow his Steps*; for which Reason the Apostle expressly asserts, that it became God, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings.

But

But besides these publick Respects which regard the Benefit of others, the Scripture intimates another End and Reason of Christ's Sufferings, in a particular and private Respect with regard to himself alone; for as he was Man as we are, and *encompassed about with the same Infirmities as we are, and was in all Points tempted like as we are, and yet was to be without Sin*: It was necessary for him to chuse such a State of Life, as he saw would most effectually contribute to resist and overcome all the Temptations he should be assaulted with, to destroy the Root and Source of Sin, Self-will, and to preserve his Will in perpetual Conformity to, and Union with the Will of God, and to keep himself spotless and without Sin; and to this End his divine Wisdom chose a Life of Suffering as most convenient; all which I think St. Paul fully proves where he says, that *though he were a Son, yet learned he Obedience by the Things which he suffered*: q. d. Though our blessed Lord was the Son of God, yet when he became Man, and took our corrupted Nature upon him, in order to get the perfect Mastery over it, and to render it perfectly submissive and obedient to the Will of God, he chose to be trained up in the School of Sufferings; and our Lord himself says, *Luke xxiv. 26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these Things, and to enter into his Glory?*

If then Sufferings were but barely expedient

* Heb. v. 8.

for

for him, no doubt they are most absolutely necessary for us; for this Reason the holy Apostle St. *Paul* set such an infinite Value upon suffering, out of Love to, and in Imitation of his suffering Lord, as to value nothing else in Comparison; *I determined*, says he, *1 Cor. ii. 2. not to know any Thing but Jesus Christ and him crucified*; and again, *Phil. iii. 8. Doubtless I count all Things but loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom*, says he, *I have suffered the Loss of all Things*; and if we would know what Sort of Knowledge of Christ Jesus it was that he so highly esteemed, he tells us plainly a little after, saying, *That I may know him and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, and may be made conformable to his Death.*

Our Intention then in willingly accepting, and freely offering up our selves to bear whatever Suffering God sends, should be this following:

To give honour and do Homage to the divine *Justice*, in willingly accepting our Sufferings as a gentle Punishment for our Sins, humbly acknowledging that our Suffering, though never so great, is infinitely less than we deserve.

Our Intention also should be, by our Sufferings to honour and do Homage to the divine *Purity and Holiness*; by freely and willingly

Phil. iii. 10.

accepting

accepting our Pains at the Hands of God as the only Means of purifying our Souls, by mortifying and crucifying the Root and Source of all Sin in us, viz. Selfishness, Selflove, and Selfwill, and thereby preparing, and by Degrees rendring our Spirits fit for the Communication and Enjoyment of God, in which eternal Life and Happiness consists.

Lastly, our Intention should be to honour our *Head*, to follow our Leader, and copy after our Pattern; and we should chearfully accept all our Sufferings in this View, that since the Head has suffered so much, it is highly fit and reasonable that the whole Body and every Member of it should willingly suffer with it; so that every one of us as a Member of Christ should in our several Ways, according to St. Paul's Expression, *fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Christ in our Flesh.*

Thus in all our Afflictions whatsoever, we, as penitent Sinners, should freely accept them at the Hands of our heavenly Director, and willingly undergo them as a mild and merciful Penance for our Sins; and as Members of Christ's Body we should offer up our selves to God, to suffer with Christ our suffering Head. We should unite our Sufferings to the Sufferings of Christ, and beg of him to sanctify ours to us, and make them Means and Instruments of purging and purifying our Souls, through the infinite Merits of his. *To whom, &c.*

Col. ii. 24.

SERMON



SERMON VIII.

I PET. II. 21.

Hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example that ye should follow his Steps.



FROM these Words I proposed to do these three Things.

I. To consider the Reason and End of the Sufferings of Christ. *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an Example.*

II. The Obligation that lies upon all, without Exception, to answer this End, and comply with this Design, for *hereunto were we called, that we should follow his Steps.*

L

III. To

III. To endeavour to shew you the Manner and Way of imitating and following his Example.

The two first of these I have already handled in two former Discourses; and am now upon the,

III^d. *Viz.* to endeavour to shew you the Way and Manner of imitating and following our blessed Lord's Example in suffering.

And here I proposed to consider how we ought to follow this holy and heavenly Example.

1. In Respect of the *Kinds* of Sufferings.
2. In Respect of the *Manner* or Way of bearing them.

1. *First*, for the Kinds of Suffering in which we are to imitate and follow our blessed Lord's Example: I observed to you, they were chiefly all those Sufferings, whether outward or inward, bodily or spiritual, which befall us in the Order of God, and the Course of his Providence; which are of God's chusing and appointment, and not our own; and proceed originally from God's Will, not our own; not such as we voluntarily procure to, and inflict upon our selves, but such as God sends us and orders for us.

Such for Instance are, Neglect, Contempt, Calumny, Reproach, Affronts, and Injuries from Men; Sickness, Poverty, Destitution both outward and inward; the Loss of Friends, Relations, Fortune, Liberty and Life: And besides these greater, though less frequent Sufferings, I observed, we might bring into the

Account

Account the lesser, but much more common, and almost continual Troubles of Life. The Uneasiness we suffer from the Elements, and the Unseasonableness or Extremity of the Weather; the daily Fatigues of our daily Labour, in our several Callings; The Disturbance, Opposition and Contradiction, we meet with from the contrary and disagreeable Humours and Tempers of those we have to deal with, and are always about us. These I told you were the Sufferings we were to follow and imitate our Lord in; because of this Sort were the Sufferings of the blessed Jesus, and none of his own procuring.

2. As to the Manner or Way of bearing our Sufferings, in Imitation of the Way in which our Lord bore his. I observed to you that we ought to endeavour after,

1.) The like End and Design.

2.) The like Spirit, or inward Disposition and outward Behaviour, which the blessed Jesus had in his Sufferings.

1.) Now the End and Design which our blessed Lord had in his Sufferings, being, as the Scripture in general informs us, and my Text in particular, and as I proved at large in my first Discourse, not only to be a Sacrifice for Sin, but *to give us an Example that we should follow his Steps*; to shew Men the Way that leads to Holiness and Happiness, to oblige and animate them by his Example to walk in it; and to merit Grace for Sufferings, to become instrumental to our Purification and Sal-

vation, and Strength for us to bear them, and make use of them to that End: This being the main End of our blessed Saviour's Sufferings, I observed to you that it was our Duty to conform our selves to it, and to have the like End in our Sufferings as he had in his.

That to this Purpose we ought willingly to accept, and freely to offer up our selves to God, to bear whatever Suffering he is pleased to send us.

And that, in so doing, our End and Intention ought to be,

To give Honour and do Homage to the divine *Justice*, in willingly accepting our Sufferings as a gentle Punishment for our Sins, humbly acknowledging, that our Suffering, though never so great, is infinitely less than we deserve.

That our Intention also should be, by our Sufferings, to honour and do Homage to the divine *Purity and Holiness*; by freely and willingly accepting our Pains at the Hands of God, as the only Means of purifying our Souls, by mortifying and crucifying the Root and Source of all Sin in us, *viz.* Selfishness, Self-love, and Self-will, and thereby preparing, and by Degrees rendring our Spirits fit for the Communication and Enjoyment of God, in which eternal Life and Happiness consists.

And *lastly*, that our Intention should be to honour our *Head*, to follow our Leader, and copy after our Pattern; that we ought cheerfully to accept all our Sufferings in this View, that since the Head has suffered so much, it is
highly

highly fit and reasonable that the whole Body, and every Member of it, should suffer with it.

Thus in all our Afflictions whatsoever, we, as penitent Sinners, should humbly accept them at the Hands of our heavenly Director, and cheerfully and willingly undergo them, as a mild and merciful Penance for our Sins; and as Members of Christ's Body we should offer up our selves to God, to suffer with Christ our suffering Head. We should unite our Sufferings to the Sufferings of Christ, and beg of him to sanctify ours to us, and make them Means and Instruments of purifying our Souls through the infinite Merits of his. But,

2.) *Secondly*, As we should endeavour after the like End and Design, so we ought also to endeavour after the like Spirit or inward Disposition, and outward Behaviour in all our Sufferings, as the blessed Jesus had in his.

And the Spirit with which the blessed Jesus bore his Sufferings, was a Spirit of *Resignation*, of *Meekness*, and *Patience*.

First, The blessed Jesus bore all his Sufferings in a Spirit of perfect *Resignation*, in a total and absolute Submission and Conformity of his Will to the Will of God, in departing from his own Will to go over, and give it up to God's Will. He has told us that ^a *He came not to do his own Will but the Will of God*; that ^b *it was his Meat* (the Nourishment, and

^a John vi. 38.

^b John iv. 34.

Support, and the very Life of his Spirit) *to do the Will of him that sent him.* Even the bitter Cup of his Passion was sweetned to him, by the Consideration that it was offered to him by his Father's Hands; for how chearfully does he say, ^a *The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* How freely and fully did he resign up his Will to the Will of God, when he said, ^b *Father, if this Cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will, not mine, be done?*

Secondly, From this total Resignation of his own Will to God's Will, and from his considering and looking upon all that hapned to him as the Will of God, flowed that most amiable *Meekness* and Mildness which shone through all the Sufferings of the Son of God, and gilded and enameled the darkest Scenes of his Passion, with the most charming and attractive Beauty and Sweetness.

He did not only bear the highest Indignities and Contempt, and the most outrageous Insults, without shewing any Resentment outwardly in Words, but even without being in the least inwardly exasperated, provoked, or even moved. He generally answered the Clamours of his Enemies with ^c Silence, (^d *as a Lamb before the Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth*) or when he did speak, he answered their Fierceness with Meekness; and returned

^a John xviii. 11.
62, 63. xxvii. 14.

^b Luke xxii. 42.
^d Acts viii. 32.

^c Matth. xxvi.

their barbarous and inhuman Treatment of him, with a Behaviour full of divine Charity and Kindness.

For when *those of his own House and Family became his Enemies*, and *hated him without a Cause*, yea, and *his own familiar Friend whom he trusted, who did also eat of his Bread, laid wait for him, and digged a Pit for his Soul*; when, I say, the Traitor Judas, the Reproach of human Nature, and the Execration of Mankind, came to betray the Lamb of God, and to deliver him into the Jaws of blood-thirsty Wolves; all that he said to him was, *a Friend, wherefore art thou come?* He was not moved with Indignation at his Hypocrisy, nor exasperated at his Ingratitude, nor provoked to the least Desire or Thought of Revenge at the Injury. He neither upbraided him with past Kindnesses or Favours, nor reproached him for his present Treachery, nor complained of his Injustice, nor exposed him for his Wickedness; he shewed himself the same to him he had always done before, and treated him with the same Meekness and Gentleness, as if he had received no Injury or Unkindness from him. Though the Traitor *rewarded him Evil for Good, and Hatred for his Good-will*; yet he returned Good for Evil, Love for Hatred, Friendship for Enmity, and was as ready to have shewn himself his Friend, as he was to call him so, had he been but dis-

: Matth. xxvi. 50.

posed to receive the Effects of his Friendship.

Again, when one of the Officers of the High Priest had struck him with his sacrilegious Hand, for an Answer full of Wisdom, Equity and Modesty; the blessed Jesus opened his Mouth, and with an Innocence and Mildness peculiar to the Lamb of God, he only answered, *“If I have spoken Evil, bear Witness of the Evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?”* Thus being reviled he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not.

Now if we look a little deeper into this blessed Disposition and Behaviour of our blessed Lord; we shall find that the Root and Foundation of it was his total and absolute Resignation of his own Will to the Will of God, and his looking upon every Thing that hapned to him from Moment to Moment to be the Will of God, signified and declared by the Order of his Providence.

For the Foundation of outward Calmness of Behaviour, (where it is sincere, real, and constant, not disguised and put on to serve a present Turn) the Foundation, I say, of outward Calmness of Behaviour, must be the inward Calmness, Serenity and Tranquillity of the Mind; the outward Behaviour where it is natural, not artificial, being nothing but the Image of the inward Disposition. This inward Calmness or Quiet flows from the Satisfaction and Content of the Mind; and this Satisfaction and Content of the Mind proceeds

“John xviii. 23.”

from

from the satiating or satisfying of its Appetite, and Desire: As the craving of the Appetite, and gnawing of the Stomach is appeased, allayed, and quieted by its being filled with Food. Now our blessed Lord's Desire and spiritual Appetite tending and inclining only and purely to the Will of God^a, and he looking upon, and accepting all the Events of Life and whatever happened to him, as the Will of God^b, and consequently regarding Men only as the Instruments to execute the Will of God: It is easy to account for the inward Satisfaction and Content of his Mind, and the outward Calmness and Meekness of his Behaviour.

For he accounted that all that happened to him was the Will of God; and the *Will of God*, he has told us, *was his Meat*; and when he had this spiritual Food, his Appetite was satisfied, he was at Ease and Rest, and he could not shew any Uneasiness and Disturbance outwardly, when he had none within.

For the common Effects of Passion and Fierceness, such as Railing, Reviling, Upbraiding, Reproaching, are really nothing else but so many outward Signs and Testimonies of the Disturbance and Disorder within; which inward Uneasiness proceeds from the Man's being disappointed and deprived of his Desires, of what he had an Appetite to, and had set his Affections upon.

But that Man, the supreme and ruling Desire of whose Soul is towards God's Will, and

^a John iv. 34.

^b John xviii. 11.

to whom whatever happens is the Will of God; that Man, I say, has his Desire always fulfilled, and his Appetite satisfied, and consequently is always content and easy whatever befalls him. And therefore the Man that is arrived at this happy State, would no more express any Anger and Signs of Discontent against any that injure him, than an hungry Man would do against the Servants that brought him Meat to fill his Belly; nor would he quarrel with those that deprive him of any Thing in this World, any more than a Man that had eaten a full Meal, would quarrel with the Servants that took away the Dishes; for to such a one the Will of God is instead of all Things, and is all in all.

Thirdly, Our blessed Lord bore all his Sufferings in a Spirit of *Patience*.

He bore the utmost Extremity of Affliction in all Kinds without the least Murmuring, Repining, or even Complaining. His Kindness and Love to Men was not in the least abated or cooled, notwithstanding all the Hatred and Malice they had shewn to him, and the outrageous Injuries they had done him. He put in Practice his own most holy Precepts, *He loved his Enemies, he did good to them which hated him, he blessed them that cursed him, and prayed for them which despitefully used him, and persecuted him*; he employed his dying Breath in praying for them that deprived him of Life,

* Luke vi. 27, 28. Matth. v. 44.

and offered up his Blood to God as an Expiation and Atonement for the very Guilt of shedding it. He excuses instead of accusing, he lessens instead of aggravating the Crime, and earnestly calls for Pardon from Heaven, instead of Punishment. ^a *Father, says he, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

He stood firm and unshaken in his Love to God, notwithstanding he felt nothing but the seeming Effects of God's Severity and Wrath. He persisted unmoved in his *Faith* and *Hope* in God, notwithstanding he seemed to be entirely forsaken and abandoned by him. And as it plainly appears by the holy Evangelists ^b, he gave himself entirely, and committed himself to God, even after God had seemingly and in Appearance rejected him; for after he had cried out, ^c *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* The Evangelist tells us, the very last Words he spoke were, *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit*; from whence it is infallibly certain, that *he trusted in God that he would some Way or other deliver him*, notwithstanding all Appearances to the contrary, and that *he hoped against all Hope.*

So that the blessed Jesus is the highest Instance of the most invincible *Patience*, *Courage* and *Constancy*: He gave the greatest Demonstrations of the strongest *Faith*, the firmest *Hope*, and of the most ardent and inextinguish-

^a Luke xxiii. 34. xxvii. 46, 50.

^b Luke xxiii. 46, compared with Matth. ^c St. Luke.

able *Charity*, that it is possible for human, for angelical Natures, for super-angelical Natures, if such there be, to give; in the sharpest and severest Trials of these Virtues that it is possible to undergo.

Thus, like a mighty *Atlas*, did the sacred Humanity of the Son of God bear the Weight of Heaven and Earth, and sustain the Load of all the Afflictions that God and Man could lay upon him; yet stood his Ground unshaken and unmoved.

And indeed, the liveliest and likest sensible Image I can form of *Patience*, is that of a Person who is set to keep a Post, and maintain himself in one Spot; who is loaded with Weight upon his Shoulders, is attacked and thrust at with Violence on every Side; and yet stands firm and keeps his Ground, is not sunk down with the heavy Load, nor forced out of his footing by the Violence; but like a Rock founded upon a stronger Rock, he stands the Rage of the Floods and Tempests unmoved and unconcerned.

Sometimes Sufferings may be aimed and levelled at particular Virtues, as the *Faith* of the primitive Christians was by the Persecutions and Martyrdoms they suffered from the Heathens. Thus also it may so happen, that our *Truth* and *Veracity*, our *Honesty* and *Justice*, may be attempted, by Mens loading us with Hardships, in order to force us to assent to, and own some Opinions and Facts as true and just, which we believe to be false and unjust.

In

In such Cases the Point to be maintained, is, the particular Virtue that is attacked ; and the Business and Office of Patience is to enable us to bear all the Load of Sufferings that is or can be laid upon us, without giving up our Virtue, or yielding to the Vice they would force us to comply with.

But whatever particular Virtue may be designed to be shaken by Men or Devils, or to be tried and exercised by God, and so is to be the Post to be maintained by us in the Sufferings we undergo ; the three general, principal, and Fountain Virtues of Christianity, *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*, are always to be looked upon as a Point generally and principally to be maintained by Patience in all Afflictions whatsoever.

Thus then that Man may truly be said to be patient, who is not irritated nor provoked by any Kinds or Degrees of Sufferings ; neither by their Greatness and Weight, nor by their Length and Continuance, to betray by any outward Marks and Evidences, of his inward want of Faith, and Hope, and Love towards God, and Charity towards all Mankind.

And thus on the contrary, that Man is certainly impatient, who is induced by the Greatness and long Continuance of his Sufferings either to forfeit his *Faith* by questioning, doubting, or denying the Being of Providence, and the divine Care and Government of human Affairs ; or to let go his *Hope*, by distrusting, desponding, and despairing of God's Assistance and Relief at some Time, and in some Manner

ner or another; or to fail in his *Charity* towards God by murmuring against the Justice or Goodness of God in his afflicting Dispensations, thinking his Punishment heavier than his Sins, or by repining and as it were accusing God of Partiality, thinking that no Body suffers so much as he; or lastly, to throw off his *Charity* towards Men, if they are the Instruments of his Sufferings, by conceiving and harbouring Resentment, ill Will, and Revenge against them in his Heart, and by shewing it outwardly either in Words or Actions; either by passionate Behaviour, injurious, reproachful and reviling Language; or by hurtful Deeds done to their Persons, Dependants, or Fortunes.

But besides these which are the essential Characters of Impatience, there are some others of an inferior Nature and Order, which are Signs and Symptoms of a Temper very much inclined and disposed that Way; and which, though they are not Marks and Evidences of the total Absence and Extinction of the three great Christian Graces abovementioned; yet, certainly shew a Mind that cannot bear much nor long, and that is too much disposed, upon violent Attacks and great Provocations, to be shocked and moved from the Ground it should maintain. And therefore we may call them very near Approaches to, or perhaps lesser Degrees, or Beginnings of Impatience: And these are *Fretting, Vexing, Peevishness, Uneasiness*, with all Things and Persons about us. Such a Behaviour as this under Affliction, though it
does

does not betoken a total Failure of Charity, for Instance, or the Love of God and Man, yet it is a certain Sign that That Grace is in a low and languid Condition, and far from being in its Vigour, and exerting its full Power in such a Man; and if this Temper be indulged and fomented, it naturally and almost necessarily leads to the Extinction of that celestial Fire in his Heart; for how soon may fretting and vexing degenerate into murmuring and repining? And how easy a Passage, and insensible a Slip is it from Peevishness and Moroseness, to Passion and Uncharitableness? Quietness and Easiness, which are the Opposites to Fretting and Peevishness, seem to me to be the Guard to Patience, as Patience is the Guard to the other Virtues. And therefore, as necessary Outworks, are with all Diligence and Industry, with all Care and Caution, to be secured and preserved.

I should now have proceeded to the Application, and the Use we should make of this Doctrine; and also to have directed you to some Helps to these holy Dispositions, with which we ought to bear our Sufferings, in Imitation of the Example our blessed Lord has set us to follow; who *suffered for us, leaving us an Example that we should follow his Steps*: But this will be Matter for another Discourse.



SERMON IX.



I P E T. II. 21.

*Hereunto were ye called; because Christ
also suffered for us, leaving us an
Example that ye should follow his
Steps.*



Offering and Sorrow being the unavoidable Condition of this mortal Life, there could not be a greater Kindness done to the miserable Race of Mankind, than to put them in a Way of turning these temporal Evils to eternal Advantage.

And in this we can never sufficiently admire and adore the Wisdom and Goodness of God, who, as he has in several Cases made use of natural

tural Things as Means to supernatural Ends, has in this Matter so contrived, that the natural and necessary Effects of Sin should contribute to the destroying its Cause; that Suffering, which is the necessary Consequence of Sin, should not only serve for the Punishment but the Cure of it; that the Pain and Anguish which Guilt produces should be a Means to purge and purify it; that Misery should be the Road to Happiness, and Death the Gate to everlasting Life. In pursuance therefore of this Design of infinite Love and Mercy for the Good of Mankind, I have considered at large, from this Passage of my Text,

I. *First*, The Reason and End of Christ's Sufferings, from these Words, *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an Example.*

II. *Secondly*, The Obligation that lies upon all, without Exception, to answer this End, and comply with this Design; from these Words, *Hereunto were we called that we should follow his Steps.*

III. *Thirdly*, I endeavoured to shew you the Manner and Way of imitating the blessed Jesus, and following his Example in suffering.

That then which now remains is to come to the Application, and to shew the Use we should make of this Doctrine; and likewise to direct you to some Helps, towards obtaining those holy Dispositions, with which we ought to bear our Sufferings, according to the Example our blessed Lord has left us to follow.

M

As

As to the Uses, I shall draw but one at present, and that I am afraid will prove such a one as you wont like, an Use of Reproof and Correction; which, though not very pleasant, is very profitable.

I have made it my Endeavour in my former Discourses, and especially in my last, to shew you the Way and Manner of suffering according to the *Pattern in the Mount*, the suffering JESUS.

Our Business then is to examin our Lives, and see if we do really behave our selves under our Sufferings after this Manner, and do faithfully copy after this Pattern; for by this we shall know whether we are true Christians and Disciples of Jesus Christ, *If we take up our Cross daily and follow our crucified Lord.*

Now if *Christ suffered for us*, on purpose to leave us an *Example that we should follow his Steps*; and if this was the very Business we were called to, when we were called to Christianity, as the Apostle in my Text asserts; if we are no otherwise Christians than as we *take up our Cross*, and actually follow the Steps of Christ crucified, as Christ himself declares; if there be no way to Salvation but by suffering, and suffering as the *Author of our Salvation* did; if we must *suffer with Christ*, if ever we expect to *reign with him*, as St. Paul assures us; I tremble to think of the terrible Conclusion we must most of us draw for our selves, and of the wretched Condition

Condition we are in, *viz.* that we have neither Part nor Lot in this Matter, that we have no Part in Christ, nor any Lot among the Saints; that though we call our selves Christians, yet not having the Marks of Jesus Christ, Christ will disown and reject us.

For which of us follows the Steps of Christ in suffering, and the Example he has left us? Which of us bears those Afflictions which God sends, in order to make us *conformable to the Image of his Son*, as the Son of God bore his? Which of us is there that bears, I wont say the greatest Injuries, but the very least Provocations, the least real or seeming Neglect, in the Spirit and Meekness of Jesus Christ, and does not immediately take Fire and breath out nothing but Resentment? And as for great Injuries indeed, where shall we find the Man that will bear them without the Thoughts, Motions, Desire, and Design of Retaliation and Revenge? Alas! as Men *live without God in the World*, so they seem to have forgotten there is such a Being in the World; they look no farther than to second Causes, and the immediate Instruments of their Sufferings; and never consider the first Cause and Governor of all Things, like Dogs that snarl and bite at the Stone that hits them, not knowing it was their Master's Hand that threw it. Which of us could bear the real and universal Neglect, Contempt, Decry, Reproach, Insults, Injuries, Opposition, and Contradiction of all that know us; the Load

of continual Pain and Sickness; the being forsaken and disowned by all our Friends, and all this accompanied perhaps at the same Time with inward Desolation and spiritual Destitution; the being forsaken of God in Appearance, by reason of the withdrawing of the sensible Comforts and Consolations of his Presence: Which of us, I say, could bear all this after the Example and in the Spirit of JESUS CHRIST? In a most humble Submission and total Resignation of our Will to the Will of God; and in the Spirit of Meekness and Patience, being willing to bear it as the Will of God as long as God wills; *humbling our selves under the mighty Hand of God*, kissing the Rod, and adoring the Hand that corrects us? humbly acknowledging that it is but just in God to make use of all his Creatures to injure and offend us, who have offended and affronted the great Creator by our Abuse of his Creatures; to make use of all his Creatures to give us Pain, who have abused them in order to give our selves Pleasure, to make use of those Creatures for our Punishment, which we have abused to Sin? Who is there, I say, that thus looks up to God in all his Sufferings, and considers they come from him, and are the Effects of his Justice, Wisdom, and even of his Mercy and Goodness; that considers GOD as the Cause, and Man only as the Instrument of his Sufferings; and therefore takes them
humbly,

humbly, chearfully and resignedly at the Hands of God, and with Meekness, Mildness and Charity at the Hands of Men? and yet most certainly, as far as any of us come short of this, so far we come short of Christianity and so far must fall short of our Hopes and Expectations of Heaven.

I know it is usually said in Excuse for our unchristian Behaviour in the Case of Sufferings, especially in the Provocations, Affronts and Injuries which we receive from one another, that *Flesh and Blood cannot bear them*; but let this constantly be remembered for the Answer, that *Flesh and Blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*. The proper Business of Christianity is to mortify and overcome our corrupt Nature by Grace; and to make us do and suffer those Things through the Power of Grace, which we had neither Will nor Power to do by Nature.

Therefore, if we indulge our Corruptions instead of mortifying them, under Pretence that they are *natural*, and therefore not to be conquered; let us consider, that in this fallen and degenerate State it is *natural* both to sin and to be damned; and consequently if we would avoid Sin and Damnation, and be sanctified and saved, there is no other way but acting contrary to our Nature, and actually, not only in Idea and Imagination, in Desire and Design, but actually overcoming Nature by Grace; other-

wife, we really live like Heathens under the Name of Christians, and so we shall *dye in Adam*, but shall not *be made alive in Christ*; and the Saviour of Mankind will not save us, but judge and condemn us at the last Day.

This then may serve to convince us, how far we are removed from the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and true Christianity.

But however, though we ought to be humbled to the lowest Degree, yet let us not be discouraged; let us be sorrowful, but not despair at the Sight of our Faults; for there is an effectual and never-failing Help to be had, if we be but heartily and sincerely desirous to make use of it; and that is, that very Grace and Power of the holy Spirit, which enabled the blessed Jesus first, and his Apostles after him, and the primitive Christians for three hundred Years after them, to endure and bear all the Sufferings and Torments that the Subtilty or Malice of Men and Devils could invent, with the utmost Meekness, Mildness and Calmness, and the most invincible and unmovable Patience.

Now if we sincerely desire to follow the Steps of the Son of God, in the Way that he has traced out for us with his Blood, and *to suffer with Christ*, and after the Manner that Christ did, I shall beg leave to recommend the following Directions as proper Helps to this Purpose; which are of two Sorts.

First,

First, Helps by Way of Consideration.

Secondly, Helps by Way of Exercise and Practice.

The Helps by Way of Consideration are as follow.

First, We should endeavour to possess our Minds with a deep and lasting Sense and Impression of the *Necessity and great Advantage of suffering*. That nothing is more glorious to God, and beneficial to Man than to suffer according to the Example of his beloved Son, *in whom he was well pleas'd*, and by whom he was infinitely glorified; to which purpose we should frequently and seriously consider, and as frequently and earnestly pray to God to imprint upon our Minds, that the Scripture represents Sufferings or the Way of the Cross, not only as the high Way, but the only Way to Happiness; that our Saviour lived and died in Sufferings, to teach us how to suffer, to merit Grace for Sufferings, to become instrumental to our Purification and Salvation, and Strength for us to bear them *according to the Will of God*; that nothing does more gloriously display the Wisdom, Justice, Mercy and Goodness, Purity and Holiness of God, than this Order and Oeconomy in the Salvation of Man^a; and that nothing can be more beneficial to Man, than that which conduces to his Happiness, by being instrumental to his

^a See the Sermons upon Heb. ii. 10. *It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings.*

Purity and Holiness, than that which roots up the Foundation of Misery at the same Time it expels the Source of Sin, all which Suffering effects by mortifying and killing Selfishness, Self-love and Self-will, which is the Root of Misery as well as of Sin, and by using and accustoming us to give up our Wills to the Will of God, which is the only Source and Fountain both of Holiness and Happiness.

If the Consideration of this made a deep and lasting Impression upon our Spirits, it would be of infinite Use and Advantage to us, in contributing to make us bear our Sufferings as we ought.

For let our Sufferings from the Hands of God be of what Kind and Degree, of what Weight and Length soever, the Consideration and Assurance that they are the Effects not only of God's Justice but his Mercy, will powerfully move us to accept and bear them not only with Content and Patience, but with Thanksgiving. The Prospect of Health sweetens the bitter Potion, makes the nauseous Draught go glibly down, and the Patient thinks himself obliged to, and thanks the Head that prescribed, and the Hand that administers the Physick.

That Man sure can never murmur and complain, that sees nothing but Justice in his Sufferings. He can never be tempted to doubt of the Providence of God, who sees infinite Wisdom in his Afflictions. He will never despond nor despair of Relief who plainly dis-

covers

covers the Marks of infinite Love in his Corrections. He certainly has all the Reason in the World to be content and patient under his Afflictions, who knows and owns that Suffering is the only Way to Glory, and that light and momentary Pains shall be succeeded by infinite Pleasure and eternal Happiness.

Secondly, We should endeavour to possess our Hearts with the *Love of God's Will*. This we may do by a frequent and serious Consideration that the Will of God is, as God himself, infinitely wise, infinitely good and gracious, infinitely powerful, infinitely beautiful and perfect, and therefore infinitely lovely; that infinite Goodness cannot will any thing for his Creatures but what is, as for his own Glory, so for their Good, nay what is best for them, all things considered, and the highest Good they are capable of at that Time, and that in order to prepare and qualify them for, and lead them to the supreme Good, the pure and perfect Enjoyment of himself; that infinite Wisdom can never make use of improper Means, nor infinite Power of ineffectual ones to any End, and this as infallibly as infinite Love cannot be Hatred, infinite Wisdom cannot be Folly, nor infinite Power Weakness.

Now if we really love the Will of God, we shall rest content and satisfied, nay we shall rejoice in it whatever it be, whenever it is either done or suffered by us, as that which is most fit, right, wise and just, most glorious

rious to God, and beneficial to our selves. Again, if we do truly love, and are really satisfied and pleased with the Will of God, we cannot hate nor be offended at the Instruments God makes use of to execute his Will. We certainly cannot love the Will of God, and be out of Charity with Men. For

Thirdly, We should endeavour to impress it deeply upon our Minds, that *all that happens to us* from Moment to Moment, in the course of Providence, *is the Will of God*. This is so universally and infallibly true, that, excepting our own Sins, whatever happens to us even by the Sins of others, is the manifest Will of God concerning us. 'Twas in view of this Truth that our blessed Lord called his sacred Passion, which was procured by the wickedest of Men, *a Cup which his Father had given him to drink^a*. And that *David* ventured to say that *the Lord had bid Shimei curse him^b*.

Now if we were accustomed constantly to look upon all Events in this Light, the very worst would not appear so terrible and shocking to us. Poverty, Contempt, Sickness and Death considered as the Will, and sent from the immediate Hands of God, and not so much out of Justice as out of Mercy, appear rather Objects of Desire than of Horror and Aversion. When we know and are assured that this Poverty is designed to procure

^a John xviii. 11.

^b 2 Sam. xvi. 11.

us the true Riches, a Treasure in Heaven; that this Contempt is to be our Road to Glory; and this Pain and Death the Passage to eternal Happiness and Life.

And if we are used to look upon Men, only as Instruments in the Hands of Providence, for executing the Will of God, we shall be no more concerned at, nor angry with them for the Pain they put us to in what we suffer at their Hands, than a Man would quarrel with the Surgeon's Knife and Lancet that cut him in order to his Cure.

Again, If we do truly *love the Will of God, and desire it may be done*, and acknowledge every Thing that happens to be God's Will concerning us, we cannot but be satisfied, easy, and contented with whatever befalls us, and accept and bear it with all Submission and Resignation, with all Meekness and Patience both towards God and towards Man. For we cannot but be contented when our *Desire is fulfilled* and we *have what we love*.

Fourthly, We ought to endeavour to imprint upon our Souls a deep and lasting Sense of *the Sufferings and Passion of our blessed Lord*.

This would for ever put to shame and silence all Complaints. If we compare our Sufferings to the Sufferings of the Son of God, we should blush to call or think ours great. Alas, the Sufferings of all Mankind put together are no more in comparison with his, than a Drop of Water to the Ocean,

or an Atom to the Sun. And shall the Son of God suffer so much for the sake of Men, and shall Men not be willing to suffer any thing for God? Shall Innocence and Purity itself suffer such Torments for the Sins of others, and shall we guilty Wretches be unwilling to suffer any thing for our own? Shall He, to whom all Honour and Glory do of Right belong, suffer the last degree of Scorn and Shame, and shall such contemptible Wretches, as all Sinners are, affect nothing but Praise and Glory, and be unwilling to bear the Contempt that belongs to them and is their Due? Shall He, who was eternally and essentially happy, suffer such a Load of Torments for us, and shall we, who deserve nothing but eternal Misery, think much of suffering a little temporal Affliction for Him and with Him? Shall our Lord, our Master, our Father and our God suffer so much out of Love to us, and shall his Servants and Followers, his Creatures and Children be unwilling to suffer any thing with Him, to testify their Duty to Him, and their Love and Affection for Him?

The very Thought that our dear Redeemer died, and died for us, should fill our Souls with Gratitude and Love, and make us ready to *lay down our Lives for his Sake*, and to say with the holy Apostle St. Thomas, *Let us also go with Him that we may die with*

John xi. 16.

Him.

Him. Since our Lord and our God has suffered, how chearfully should we suffer with Him? What truly devout and generous Soul is there, that had been alive at the Time the blessed JESUS suffered, who would not joyfully have contributed to have lessened his Sufferings by bearing Part of them himself? Why we may do this still if we please. We in a manner lighten Christ's Sufferings when we *suffer with Him*, and help him to bear his Cross, when we willingly *for his sake* bear our own, and then we *suffer with Him* when we bear our Sufferings as He bore his; and then we *suffer for Him*, when we willingly accept our Sufferings as his Will.

Lastly, We should endeavour to possess our Minds with such a deep and lasting Impression, as never to forget, but have always before our Eyes, *our own Unworthiness and Undeserving by reason of our Sins.*

If we were but truly sensible of the abominable Nature of Sin, which is an Offence and Affront to, a Contempt of and Rebellion against the infinite, glorious and adorable Majesty of God, we should acknowledge that no Punishment can be equal to the Crime. And therefore, whatever we can suffer here, as it cannot possibly bear any Proportion to our Sins, so it ought to be looked upon and accepted as the Effect of God's Mercy rather than his Justice: who has demanded but a Penny of us when we owed him ten thousand Talents, has only corrected us with *Whips,*
when

when we deserved to be *chastised with Scorpions*, and has laid only light and temporal Afflictions upon us, when he might in Justice have loaded us with eternal Torments.

The Consideration of all this would move us to accept and bear all our Sufferings at the Hands of God, not only patiently and contentedly, but joyfully and thankfully.

These are the Helps I had to propose by way of Consideration; but these I am sensible are not sufficient: For tho' these Considerations would very much facilitate our Duty in this Case, and dispose and incline us to bear all our Sufferings after the Example and in the Spirit of Jesus Christ: yet as all our Considerations are mere human Acts, and all human Acts partake of human Weakness; and all the Power of human Nature cannot be supposed able to raise us above Nature, and make us act contrary to Nature; and as there is nothing Nature has so great an Aversion to and Abhorrence of as suffering; it follows that the Aid and Assistance of a Power superior to Nature, is absolutely necessary to enable us effectually to overcome the Propensions of our Nature, and to make us willingly and cheerfully to bear the Sufferings we naturally abhor. As the divine *Thomas à Kempis* says in the twelfth Chapter of his second Book of the Imitation of Christ, §. 8, 9.

“ It cannot be the Power of Man, it must
 “ be the Grace of Christ that works such
 “ mighty Works in our weak Flesh, as to
 make

“ make us embrace and ardently love ,
 “ what we always naturally abhor and avoid.
 “ It is not in human Nature to bear the
 “ Cross, to love the Cross, to mortify the
 “ Body and bring it into Subjection; to fly
 “ Honour, and willingly receive Affronts, to
 “ despise ones self, and desire to be despised ;
 “ to suffer all manner of Adversity, and be
 “ indifferent to any worldly Prosperity. If
 “ you look upon your self you will find you
 “ are unable to do any such thing of your
 “ self, but if you look up to God, you will
 “ be endued with Power from on high, and
 “ be enabled to overcome the World, the
 “ Flesh and the Devil.” Thus far that hea-
 venly Man. The whole Chapter well deserves
 reading, and is indeed admirable, and like
 the rest of the Book conceals a Divine in-
 ward Power under the greatest outward Plain-
 ness and Simplicity ; in this respect resembling
 in some measure the Character St. *Paul* gives
 of his own Preaching, 1 Cor. ii. 4. which
 was not with enticing Words of Man's Wis-
 dom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit and
 of Power.

In order, therefore, to enable us effectually and actually to follow the Steps of the blessed Jesus in suffering, and the Example he has left us, I shall now in the

Second Place, beg leave to offer you some Helps, by way of Exercise and Practice.

The

The *First* of which is *Prayer*.

Prayer is the great Means prescribed by the Scripture for obtaining the holy Spirit; and the holy Spirit is the sole Author of all Holiness; all the Graces and Virtues of Christianity, if they are real and solid, not ideal only and imaginary, must be the Work of God in the Soul of Man.

Now the Prayer which the holy Scripture recommends to this Purpose, is not barely one or more Acts of Prayer at set Times, but is an Habit, a State, a Life of Prayer; (which the holy Scripture expresses by *walking in the Presence of God, and praying without ceasing*) and it consists in the living in a constant Sense of God's Presence every where, frequently thinking upon Him, and lifting up our Hearts in Prayer to Him all the Day long, in all Places, at all Times, upon all Occasions.

By this ^a *giving themselves unto Prayer*, by this ^b *praying always with all Prayer, and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance*; by this continual and importunate ^c *knocking*, the Apostles and primitive Christians opened the Gates of Heaven, and drew down the holy Spirit into their Souls. And He by his powerful Operation changed their Nature and renewed it; He *cleansed and purified them from all Filthiness both of Flesh*

^a Acts vi. 4.

^b Eph. vi. 18.

^c Mat. vii. 7.

and Spirit; he sanctified their sinful and polluted Nature; he strengthened their Weakness, and animated their Faint-heartedness; he enabled them chearfully to embrace what they naturally abhorred, and to rejoyce in those Sufferings, which overwhelm others in Sorrow. Through him they were not only ^d *patient in Tribulation*, but ^e *rejoyced in their Sufferings*, and took Pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's Sake^f.

Now if we would do the same Things, undoubtedly we must be animated with the same Spirit, and invigorated with the same Power: And if we would obtain the Promise, we must necessarily perform the Condition; we must *seek* diligently if we would ^g *find*, we must *knock* hard if we would have the Door *opened* to us; we must earnestly Desire, and importunately *ask*, if we expect that *our heavenly Father should give us his holy Spirit*.

The second Help by way of Exercise and Practice is, *in every Affliction to cast our Eyes and look upon the blessed Jesus, and observe how he behaved himself in the like Circumstances*; and to beg of God to enable us to imitate his Example, and follow his Steps, and do as he did, and frequently to unite our Sufferings to his; the Sufferings of the Members to those of the Head, and

^d Rom. xii. 12.

^e Col. i. 24.

^f 2 Cor xii. 10.

^g Match. vii. 7.

beg of him to sanctify ours to us, through his.

Whoever would imitate another, must look upon him frequently, and observe him exactly: If we would draw a Picture any Thing like, our Eyes must be frequently fix'd upon the Original.

Now this looking up to the blessed Jesus, and observing his Behaviour under the like Sufferings with ours, would not only be a Means to direct and instruct, but to animate and encourage us to follow him, and to move us incessantly to importune the Almighty for Grace to enable us actually to do it. If we would, *in all our Sufferings here upon Earth, with St. Stephen, stedfastly look up towards Heaven, to JESUS the Author and Finisher of our Faith*, we should obtain the like Grace with him, and be enabled to follow the Steps of our blessed Master close, as he did, and bear our Afflictions with the like Meekness, Patience and Charity; and with him we should obtain the like Reward; and for our momentary Sufferings be crowned with eternal Glory; and for our short-lived Sorrow be compassed with everlasting Joy.

Thirdly, and Lastly, Whenever any considerable Affliction befalls us, We should make an Act of offering up our selves to God, freely and willingly to accept and bear it as God's Will; and to beg of him to enable us to bear it according to his Will; and to
continuc

continue frequent doing thus, during the Continuance of the Affliction; frequently using and repeating from the Bottom of the Heart, those Scripture Expressions of Resignation to the divine Will, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Thy Will be done.*

Thus I have endeavoured to direct both you and my self to such Helps, as will be most effectual and conducive to make us follow the Steps of the blessed Jesus in suffering: Which if we neglect to do, our Sufferings here will be nothing but Preludes to eternal Misery and Torments hereafter. But if we endeavour to *suffer according to the Will of God*; our temporal Pains will be instrumental in procuring us eternal Happiness, and ^a *our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*, through the infinitely meritorious Sufferings of the SON of GOD. *To whom, &c.*

^a 2 Cor. iv. 17.





SERMON X.



JOB XXII. 21.

*Acquaint now thy self with him,
(i. e. with God) and be at Peace.*



PEACE! The Desire of our Souls
and Delight of our Eyes! the
Center of Repose and Rest
to our labouring weary Hearts!
the great and universal Object of
the Vows, Wishes, Longings, and perpetual
Pursuit of all the miserable Sons of *Adam*!
*How beautiful are the Feet of them that
bring glad Tidings of thee!* How desirable
are the Ways, how pleasant the Paths that
lead

lead to thee; how welcome is the Knowledge of the Means to obtain thee!

The sweet Repose of an hard-labouring Man at Night, the quenching of a burning Thirst with cooling chrystal Streams, are but faint Images of the Pleasure and Delight that true Peace communicates to, and diffuses through the Soul; for Peace, in the Language of the holy Scripture, is but another Name for Happiness. And yet how wretched, blind, and foolish, are Mankind, who notwithstanding all their Search and Labour after Happiness, still continue miserable! because they seek it where it is not, and do not seek it where it is.

We are in the midst of Light, and yet continue in the dark, and blind: We are continually near the Well of Life, and yet die with Thirst for want of knowing it, and reaching out our Hand. *We live, and move, and have our being in,* are encompassed on every Side with, and penetrated through by the Source and Fountain of Happiness, and yet remain in Misery; and are as far from Happiness, as Earth from Heaven. We seek our Happiness in bodily Pleasures, whereas it is to be found only in spiritual Delights; we seek our Happiness in the Creature, whereas it is only in the Creator; we seek Happiness in the Experience and Knowledge of all other Things, whereas it is only to be found in being *acquainted with God.* *Acquaint now thy self with him, &c.*

From these Words it is natural,

I. To shew the Way of becoming *acquainted with God*.

II. To shew the Advantages and happy Effects of this Acquaintance.

I. *First*, Then, I am to shew the Way of becoming *acquainted with God*.

There are two Kinds of Knowledge, or of being acquainted with a Thing, or Person: The one is *speculative*, and is the ideal Knowledge of the Nature and Properties of a Thing, and of the Qualities of a Person: The other is *practical*, and is *experimental* Knowledge, or *personal* Acquaintance.

Thus when a Philosopher reasons about the Nature of Light and Heat, the Result of this is *speculative* or *ideal* Knowledge; but when a Man comes into the Sun-shine, and sees the chearful Light, and feels the enlivening Warmth; this is *experimental* Knowledge. When I hear an excellent Character of a Man whom I never saw, and revolve in my Mind what has been told me of his Person and Qualities, then I have an *ideal* Knowledge of him; but if I happen to come into his Company and get acquainted, and at last become familiar and intimate with him, and daily see, and hear, and feel the Effects of his Wisdom and Learning, his Virtue and Piety, his Candour and Humanity, his Friendship and Love; this is *personal* Knowledge and Acquaintance.

Now

Now of these two, the *experimental* undoubtedly is the only solid and satisfactory Knowledge; and is as much superior to the *ideal*, as the Substance is to the Shadow, as the Sun in the Firmament to a Sun painted upon Canvass, and as a living Man to his Picture.

The Reason of which is, that *ideal* Knowledge is not the Perception of the Things themselves present; but only the forming in our Minds the Images and Pictures of Things absent: Whereas *experimental* Knowledge is the real Perception of the Things themselves, present and acting upon us, and communicating themselves and their Properties to us. So that a Man can no more receive any real Benefit by all *ideal* Knowledge, than one that is in a cold dark Dungeon could really be enlightned and warmed by his thinking upon Light and Heat; or be enlightned by a Picture of the Sun, or warmed by a painted Fire.

The only Excellency and Value, and the only good Use of *ideal* Knowledge is to excite our Desires, and animate our Endeavours after the *experimental*. As the Account the Queen of *Sheba* had heard of King *Solomon's* Wisdom and Glory, raised a Desire in her, and moved her to take a long Journey to see him; which when she had done, and thereby become personally acquainted with him, she confessed that all the *Idea* she had framed from Report of his Grandeur and Magnifi-

cence, was nothing in Comparison of what she found it by *Experience*.

Thus the *ideal* Knowledge which we have of God, should excite us to endeavour after the *experimental*; and if it has not this Effect upon us, it will be of no Use and Advantage to us; nay, it will be so far from contributing to our Happiness, that it will aggravate our Guilt, and consequently augment our Misery; but setting this last Consideration aside, no *ideal* Knowledge is comparable to *experimental*, no *ideal* Knowledge whatsoever can give us Virtue or Happiness.

The highest Degrees, and the clearest and most distinct Conceptions of the *ideal* Knowledge of the divine Nature and Attributes, is not comparable to the least and lowest Degree of the *experimental* Knowledge of them.

A penitent Sinner, who is *sensible* of God's Mercy in the Forgiveness of his Sins; who *feels* the divine Compassion in *healing his broken Heart*, and in curing the Wounds and Anguish of his guilty Conscience; who *experiences* the divine Favour in *speaking Peace* to his Soul, and comforting and calming his disconsolate and *troubled Spirit*; a Soul that *experiences* the Power of God actually and effectually *mortifying and killing all Vices in it*; that feels a divine Strength enabling it to resist and overcome Temptations; that *sensibly perceives* its corrupt Inclinations to abate, and its holy Dispositions to encrease; that

that *finds* it self daily more and more loosned from the Chains of Earth, and by a powerful Hand lifted up above the World, to have its *Conversation in Heaven*; that *feels* itself changed by Degrees from earthly and sensual, into spiritual and divine; a Soul that *tasts and sees how gracious the Lord is*, who *fills it with all Peace and Joy in believing*, with Peace inconceivable and Joy ineffable, with *the Peace of God which passeth all Understanding*, and with *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*; all which are undoubtedly the Works of God in the Soul of Man, and Communications of real Influences from the Spirit of God to the Spirits of Men: Such a Man, I say, who has *felt* the least of these *inward Experiences*, has a much better Knowledge of the Mercy, the Power, and Goodness of God, than all the Ideas of these Attributes of the whole World put together, could give him as long as the World lasts.

A Rebel that has had *his Life granted* him, has a better Knowledge of his Prince's Mercy, than if he had *only heard* that he had pardoned a whole Nation. A poor Man that *received* but one hundred Pounds from a King, would have a better Knowledge of his Goodness and Liberality, than if he *had only heard* that he had given Mountains of Gold away to others.

Besides, no *ideal Knowledge* whatsoever can give us either Virtue or Happiness.

A Man

A Man may have the justest and sublimest Ideas of Virtue and Happiness, and yet remain vicious and miserable, of which there are as many Instances and Examples, as there are learned and wicked Men in this World, and evil Spirits in another. For all *Ideas* are only Pictures and Images of Things, not the Things themselves, and therefore cannot give what they have not and are not, *viz.* the Objects or their Influences to fill and satiate the Desires and Longings of our Faculties; without which they must remain empty and unsatisfied, and consequently uneasy and miserable. Ideal Knowledge can no more fill the Capacities and relieve the Necessities of our Souls, than the feasting a Man's Eyes with the Picture of a Feast would satisfy his Hunger, or being in Possession of a painted heap of Gold would make him rich.

If therefore we would be enlightened and warmed, we must come to the Fountain of Light and Heat; if we would be holy and happy, we must draw near to the Source of Holiness and Happiness; if we would *be at Peace*, we must *acquaint our selves with God*.

In order to which we may observe that there are three or four ways of becoming acquainted with any Person.

1. The *First* is, if he has written any Thing, to acquaint our selves with, and be conversant in his Writings, for they generally are the truest and liveliest Image of the Mind.

2. The

2. The *Second* is, if he be a great Person, to get some Opportunity of coming into his Presence, and to do this as frequently and constantly as we may be permitted.

3. The *Third* is, readily to embrace all Opportunities that are offered to us of eating at his Table.

4. The *Fourth* is, the living in the House and conversing with him continually.

These are the only Ways of becoming throughly and intimately acquainted with any one.

'Tis true it is not always in our Power to make use of these Ways, in order to become acquainted with Men, because they depend chiefly upon their Will. But God has left all these Ways free and open to us, and put them into our own Power, and earnestly desires, and graciously and most lovingly invites, nay solicits us to make use of them and become acquainted with Him.

First then in order to become acquainted with God, we must acquaint our selves, and be very conversant in his Writings, that is his holy Word.

God has given Mankind the justest Description and Account of his Nature in his Word. If we search the Scripture, in it we shall find the Beauties and Perfections of the divine Nature, painted in the most lively and lovely Colours. With what Strength and Energy do these heavenly Writings represent the Power of God? How lofty and sublime are the prophetick Descriptions of the divine Grandeur

deur and *Majesty*? How tenderly and affectingly do those holy Writings express the *Love* and *Tenderness* of our heavenly Father for his Children, the Sons of Men? With what humble Plainness and Simplicity do the Gospels represent the infinite *Condescension*, and the plain and humble Life of the Son of GOD, when He became the Son of Man? In these holy Books, we see the divine *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* brightly and gloriously displayed in those great and wonderful Acts and Effects of them; the *Creation*, *Preservation* and *Redemption* of Mankind, and a *particular Providence* watching continually over the Righteous in all Ages.

And this Knowledge of God which humble and devout Souls receive from the holy Scripture, is not a bare *ideal* Knowledge, nor consequently without Life and Vigour, but is communicated to, and impressed upon their Spirits by God himself. The same divine Spirit, who first inspired the Writers, still accompanying and assisting the well-disposed Readers of those holy Books.

Hence it is that they who read the holy Scripture with Humility and christian Simplicity, are so wonderfully affected with it. Hence it is that the Impressions of God, that are made upon their Spirits by means of these holy Writings are so strong and lively, so operative and fruitful, that they produce the proper effects of Esteem and Reverence for, of Love, Duty and Obedience to, the divine Majesty in their Hearts and Lives. How

How feelingly does the Royal Prophet express the Effect God's Word had on him, saying, *O how sweet are thy Words to my tast! Yea sweeter than Honey to my Mouth?* How does he labour to extol and recommend it for giving Light, Understanding and Wisdom^b? that is, for communicating the best Knowledge to us, the Knowledge of God and of our Duty? For directing us in all our Ways, and keeping us from falling and offending God? *Thy Word*, says he, *is a Lantern unto my Feet, and a Light unto my Paths*^c. And, *Thy Words have I hid within my Heart, that I should not sin against thee*^d. And lastly, from the Pleasure and Happiness which this Knowledge of God, from his Law and holy Word, gives to the devout and pious Soul. *The Statutes of the Lord*, says he, *rejoice the Heart*^e. *I have rejoiced in the Way of thy Testimonies*^f. *I will delight my self in thy Statutes*^g. *Thy Law is my Delight*^h. *In God's Word will I rejoice*ⁱ. *O give me Understanding and I shall live*^k.

All true Knowledge of God must come from God only, as the Knowledge of Light can come only from Light itself.

Thus then, if we would have a true, living, sanctifying and saving Knowledge of God, we must be frequently conversant in, and be-

^a Psal. cxix. 103. ^b Psal. cxix. 98, 130. ^c Psal. cxix. 107.
^d Psal. cxix. 2. ^e Psal. xix. 8. ^f Psal. cxix. 14. ^g Psal. cxix.
 16, 47. ^h ——— 77. ⁱ Psal. lvi. 4. Old Translation. ^k cxix. 144.

come throughly acquainted with his holy Word, which he is always ready to accompany with his holy Spirit. We should read and meditate therein Night and Day, we should really make it our Business, and be diligent and constant in it as often as ever we have Opportunity. And Opportunity we may have often enough, if we have but the Inclination and Will. Even they who have the least Time have one whole Day in seven, which they may employ in reading the holy Scripture and in Prayer. And no Man's Time can be so wholly taken up, but that he may well spare some Time every Day for this Employment. There is no one so hard worked, but he can find Time every Day to follow his Pleasures, and converse with those he likes; and some of that Time he might employ in making an Acquaintance with God, in conversing with Him and speaking to Him in Prayer, and hearkning to God speaking to Him in his holy Word: And this would be a Refreshment both to his Body and Spirit. As for those to whom God has given more Time, He justly expects they should give Him more of it again. And they ought to think it their great Privilege and Happiness, as well as Duty, to employ great Portions of that Time upon God, in order to fit them for a glorious Eternity, which others are forced to employ in hard Labour in order to support a miserable Life.

And

And when we read God's holy Word, we should do it with great Reverence, Humility and Christian Simplicity, desiring and intending no other Thing but to know God and his Will, in order to love and obey him.

And to our reading we should constantly joyn our most fervent Prayers to God, that he would vouchsafe to let his holy Spirit accompany and assist us in reading his holy Word, that it may have its proper Influence upon, and produce its proper Effects in our Hearts and Lives; this naturally leads me to,

2. The second Way of getting acquainted with any Person, viz. to take some Opportunity of coming into his Presence and conversing with him, and to do this as often as we may be permitted.

And this the divine Majesty has condescended to permit us as often as we please. *The House of God and Gate of Heaven* is not shut and barred against us; whether we understand by these Expressions the material Temples built with Hands, or the living Temples of God, the Souls of Men, we may have constant Access to the one, and continual Access to the other, and there enter into, and come before God's Presence, and there converse with him and speak to him by Prayer.

^b Gen. xxviii. 16.

For Prayer is, or should be nothing else but an attentive fixing the Mind and Thoughts upon God present in the Soul, and considering Him as looking upon us, and attentive to us, and in this Disposition to offer up our Petitions to Him, to adore and worship Him for his infinite Greatness and Majesty, to praise Him for his infinite Glories and Perfections, to thank Him for his unspeakable Mercy and Goodness to us, and to devote and dedicate our selves entirely to his Glory and Service, and to do all this with the humble Freedom and Affection of most loving, dutiful, and obedient Sons.

If we did constantly take all Opportunities thus to speak to, and converse with God in Prayer, both publick and private, we should encrease daily more and more in the Knowledge and Love of God; we should feel the Notions and Impressions of the divine Majesty and his transcendent Excellency, of his Beauty and Loveliness, of his Wisdom, Power, Justice and Mercy more strong and lively upon our Spirits, more active and operative in our Hearts. For being there exposed to the Sun of Righteousness, we shall find and feel our selves both enlightned and warmed; there we shall find our pious and devout Affections excited and quickned, our Understandings informed, our Heart warmed and our holy Resolutions strengthened; there our *Faith* is encreased, our *Hope* animated, and our *Charity* more enflamed.

And

And as Prayer is called, and really is a conversing with God, and in all Conversation there must be a mutual and reciprocal Intimation of one another's Minds; so it is by these Things that God may be said to converse with, to speak and communicate himself to us. We are not to imagine that God speaks to the Soul by distinct Sounds, and articulate Words, as some Enthusiasts have vainly fancied, and thereby deceived themselves and others, mistaking the Voice of their own foolish and corrupt Imagination for the Voice of God: But God's *Words* are *Works*, *dixit & facta sunt*. For Words being the outward Manifestation of what lies hidden within the Mind, the *Works* of God, which are outward Manifestations of the inward Powers and Perfections of the divine Nature^a, may by a Figure elegantly and justly be called *Words*; for which reason the holy Scripture attributes a *Voice* to them, holy David saying, ^b *The Heavens declare the Glory of God*; and that *there is no Speech nor Language where their Voice is not heard*; and therefore we find him frequently inviting the whole inanimate Creation, as so many *Words*, to joyn together to form an Hymn of Praise to their great Creator.

Thus then all good and holy Thoughts, Motions, Inclinations, Desires and Resolu-

^a Rom. i. 20.

^b Psal. xix. 1, 3.

rions, all strong and lively Impressions of Awe and Reverence, of Love, Duty, and Obedience to the divine Majesty, which are infallibly the *Works of God* in the Soul of Man, may properly be called the *Words* or *Voice of God*, as signifying his Will and Pleasure to us, and what he would have us follow and obey; and also manifesting his divine *Power* in us, and *Goodness* towards us, *from whom alone all holy Desires, all good Counsels, and all just Works do proceed*: And from this Kind of speaking of God to Men, viz. the working in them holy Desires and Actions, the Scripture assures us the only true Knowledge of God proceeds. *^a Did not thy Father do Judgment and Justice? — He judged the Cause of the poor and needy, was not this to know me saith the Lord?*

This Knowledge then of God is to be got only by constantly and frequently conversing with Him in humble and fervent Prayer, to which is promised the holy Spirit, *^b The Spirit of Truth, who is to teach us all Things necessary, and ^c to lead us into all necessary Truth.* And for this the divine Providence has furnished all Men with sufficient Opportunities; and when Men do neglect this Intercourse with God by Prayer, it is not for want of Time, but for want of Will.

3. The third Way of becoming acquaint-

^a Jer. xxii. 15, 16. ^b John ii. 27. ^c John xvi. 13.

ted with any one is, to take all Opportunities that are offered us of eating at his Table.

This has been always accounted a great Instance of Friendship and Familiarity among Men; and a Mark of distinguishing Favour and Kindness in Superiors to their Inferiors; and is a Season wherein Mankind generally shew themselves most free and open, and consequently is one of the best Opportunities of knowing them intimately and thoroughly.

The divine Goodness and Condescension has prepared a Table for us, in the most holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to which he most lovingly does invite us, saying, *a Eat, O Friends, and drink, O Beloved: b A Feast of fat Things* indeed! Where we are fed and nourished *with the spiritual Food of the most precious Body and Blood of the Son of God*; with the Bread of Life, and Wine of Angels, and the Food of Immortality: Where our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not only the Master of the Feast, but the Feast itself; where we may see the Heart of God opened to us, and overflowing with Love and Goodness towards us; where we behold Jesus Christ *c evidently set forth as crucified* for us, as it were *before our Eyes*. In the Representation of whose Death and Crucifixion, exhibited to us in this holy Sacrament, we may behold, as in a Mirror, the highest Instances of the Power and

^a Cant. v. 1.

^b Isai. xxv. 6.

^c Gal. iii. 1.

Wisdom, of the *Justice* and *Mercy* of the Creator, towards his fallen Creatures in the Redemption of Men by the Death and Passion of the Son of God. Here we may see painted in the strongest and liveliest Colours, how Mercy was extended to miserable and guilty Creatures, without infringing the Rights of the glorious Creator. Here we may see the Son of God suffering for Men, both for the Pardon of their Sins, and to set them an Example that they should follow his Steps; to shew them that Suffering is for Sinners the Way to Holiness and Happiness, to merit Strength for Men to bear it according to the Will of God, and Grace for suffering to become instrumental to their Purification and Salvation. Here we clearly see the *Wisdom* of God in contriving and finding out the Means of Salvation, the Power of God in giving Virtue and Efficacy to them, the *Justice* of God in the temporal Chastisement and Correction of Sin, and the *Mercy* of God in remitting the eternal Punishment, and admitting the repenting Sinner to eternal Happiness and Glory. Here surely, if any where, we may *taste and see how gracious the Lord is*, where we drink of the *Cup of Salvation*. Here, surely, we may become well acquainted with God, where we are assured that worthy Receivers become *one with Christ, and Christ*

* Psal. xxxiv. 8.

with them, that they dwell in Christ, and Christ in them. Which leads me to

The *Fourth* and last Way of knowing and becoming acquainted with any one, and that is the living in the House, and conversing with him continually.

The House and Temple of God is the Soul of Man. To live with God in this House is to live an inward and recollected life in a continual Sense of God's Presence. Wherever we are, whatever we do to consider God as present and looking on; as seeing all our Actions, hearing all our Words, and knowing the very Secrets of our Hearts; and therefore always to speak and act as in the Presence of God, to do all Things as in his Sight and for his Glory; to keep Him Company and converse with Him all the Day long, by frequently thinking upon Him, and lifting up our Hearts and speaking to Him in short, but fervent Prayers or Adorations, Praises or Thanksgivings, even in the midst of our worldly Business and Employments, even in the midst of Company and Diversions.

And the habitual conversing with God in this Manner, would so familiarize Him to us, would make us become so well acquainted, and if I may use the Expression, so intimate with Him, as to make the continual Thoughts of Him not only no Burthen and Uneasiness, but the greatest Satisfaction and Pleasure to us. We should rejoice and delight as much in

his Presence and Company, as one Friend does in that of another, or a most loving and dutiful Child, in that of his most tender and indulgent Father. We should find that the Thoughts of God's being present, would heighten and add a Poignancy to all the innocent Pleasures of Life, and would lessen and take away the Sting of all Afflictions. We should experience that the Presence of God would be the surest Preservative against Sin, the noblest Animater and Encourager of Virtue, the highest Cordial in Sickneſs, the readieſt Help in Trouble; that it would turn our Sorrow into Joy, and make a Kind of Heaven upon Earth. Which naturally leads me to conſider

II. The Advantages and happy Effects of this *Acquaintance with God*.

And theſe are the greateſt and nobleſt human Nature is capable of enjoying. Firſt, *Peace* and Tranquillity of Mind, which is to the Soul what Health is to the Body, the Foundation of all Pleaſure and Delight: Then, Happineſs by the exerciſing and perfecting the nobleſt Faculties of the Soul, the Underſtanding and the Will; in the filling and ſatiating of which with their proper Objects, the Underſtanding with the Knowledge, and the Will with the Love of God, in which the only true Happineſs of all ſpiritual Natures does conſiſt.

Peace,

Peace, as it signifies Reconciliation with an offended God, and is a Calmness and Tranquillity of Spirit, (opposite to the Troubles, the Strings and Anguish of Guilt and Remorse) arising in the penitent Sinner from the Hopes of Pardon and Forgiveness: This Peace, I say, can only flow from the Knowledge of, and Faith in God's infinite Goodness and Mercy in his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Peace, as it relates to Men, either that which they keep with us, or we with them, both proceed from our Knowledge of, and Acquaintance with God. For *when a Man's Ways please the Lord, He maketh his Enemies to be at Peace with him^a*. And as to the Peace we keep with others, they that know God know Him to be *the God of Peace^b*; and therefore endeavour *as much as lies in them, if it be possible, to live peaceably with all Men^c*.

Peace, as it signifies the Quiet of the Mind, proceeding from the allaying the Strife and Rebellion of the Passions, and from subduing and keeping under all corrupt and vicious Inclinations, is entirely owing to the *experimental* Knowledge of the Power of God *working mightily in us*, and enabling us effectually and actually to resist their Attacks and break their Force. And to mention no more,

^a Prov. xvi. 7.

^b 2 Thess. iii. 16.

^c Rom. xii. 18.

Peace, That *spiritual Peace* which consists in a perfect Content and Satisfaction in the Will of God only, without regard to any thing else, let it place us in what State, Condition or Circumstances soever; which subsists in the midst of all outward Troubles, nay of all inward Afflictions and Desolations too; which lies so deep at the Bottom of the Soul, that like the Bottom of the great Deep, it may enjoy a Calm, at the same Time that the Surface is tossed and disordered with a Storm; this Peace, which is the Foundation of all the Rest, and in Dignity infinitely surpasses all the Rest, being that *Peace of God which passeth all Understanding*^a; this Peace, I say, flows only from the Knowledge of God, from the great, strong and lively Impressions of the inconceivable and ineffable Excellency and Transcendency of the divine Nature, and of the Homage due to supreme Majesty and Dominion, made by the Spirit of God upon the Spirits of Men; and from the deep Sense and intimate Conviction wrought in us, that all intelligent Creatures ought to sacrifice their Wills wholly and entirely, absolutely and without Reserve, to the Will of their adorable Creator, being infallibly assured that the Will of God is wholly and altogether wise, just, good, lovely, and desirable.

Lastly, from the *Acquaintance with*, and Knowledge of God flows true Happiness.

^a Phil. iv. 7.

Nothing is so pleasant as to look upon Beauty, nothing so delightful as to love it and be beloved by it. Certainly then the supreme Happiness must consist in contemplating and possessing, in loving and enjoying the supreme Perfection, who is Beauty and Love itself, and *whom truly to know is eternal Life*^a. The more we know of God, the more we must know of his Goodness and Love, *for God is Love*; and the more we know of the Love of God, the more we must love Him, and the more we love Him the more we shall be loved by Him, and the more we love Him and are beloved of Him the happier we shall be, the happier both here and hereafter. All Happiness consists in loving, and possessing the Object of our Love. Men will go through the greatest Pains with the greatest Pleasure, and endure the greatest Hardships with Delight even for the mortal Objects of their Love; and surely Charity or divine Love must be infinitely more strong and powerful, as its Object, God, is infinitely more attractive, charming, beautiful and lovely. This divine and heavenly Flame is so powerful, that *many Waters cannot extinguish it*^b, and is *stronger than Death*^c. It lightens all Afflictions, it sweetens all Pains, it turns our Sorrows into Joy, and makes our Joys divine; and is a Foretaste of those eternal Joys which God has prepared for those that know and love Him. *Now to God the Father, &c.*

^a John xvii. 3.

^b Cant. viii. 7.

^c Ver. 6.



SERMON XI.



PSALM LXXI. 4. Old Translation.

*Thou, O Lord God, art the Thing that
I long for.*



WHAT the particular Occasion was upon which this *Psalm* was composed is not easy, nor indeed necessary to determine. What is most useful for us to know, is also most plain and evident, and that is, that the holy Author of it was in Affliction when he wrote it, and that the Method he took for Deliverance out of it, or Support under it, was to have Recourse to God by pouring

ing out his Heart and Complaints before Him.

The whole *Psalm* is nothing else but the pious Breathings of a devout and heavenly Soul in Distress, easing its Sorrows by venting them in the Bosom of its best Friend, its God and Father; praying to Him for Help at present, praising Him for his Mercies past, and trusting in, and relying upon his Wisdom, Power, Goodness and Truth for the future.

The Words of my Text seem to be a Reason and Motive, that the *Psalmist* urges and presses upon the Almighty, in order to move and incline Him to deliver him out of the Hand of his Enemy; for thus he prays, *ver. 3. Deliver me, O my God, out of the Hand of the Ungodly; out of the Hand of the unrighteous and cruel Man. For Thou, O Lord God, art the Thing that I long for; Thou art my Hope, even from my Youth.*

The Enemy that *David* here chiefly intends, and prays to be delivered from, I take to be his greatest Enemy, the spiritual one; for the Words not only may, but ought in Strictness to be rendred thus, *Deliver me out of the Hand of the wicked, the unrighteous and cruel One.* And though we should suppose that the Affliction, which was the Occasion of this *Psalm*, was a temporal, not a spiritual one: Yet considering the spiritual Evils the Devil labours to make Men run into, from the temporal Afflictions they suffer, by

by inciting them to the Sins of Impatience, Irresignation, and Distrust; there is no doubt to be made, but that if *David* did here pray to be freed from a temporal Enemy, it was with this farther and higher View, *viz.* to defeat the Artifices of his spiritual one.

Besides, if we understand this Passage in a meer literal Sense only, and take the Enemy here mentioned for a meer temporal Enemy only, the following Words will have no Weight, and be no Motive at all to God to deliver him.

For thus it would stand, *Deliver me, O God, from this temporal Enemy and Calamity, because Thou art the only Thing I desire and long for*: As if it were impossible for a Man to have the Friendship of God, if he were in the Power of his Enemy; as if it were impossible to obtain God, if a Man lost this World or his Life: Whereas on the contrary it is certain, that Men may have the Favour of God, though the World frowns upon them; and may possess and enjoy God within, though they are destitute of all outward worldly Enjoyments: Nay, that Afflictions, if we made a right Use of them, would serve to make us draw nearer to God, and to unite our selves more closely to him. Therefore the *Psalmist* could not urge his longing for God as a Motive to be delivered from the Hand of Man; nor his Desire of possessing God, as a Reason against his parting with the World.

But

But supposing it to be his spiritual Enemy that he prays to be freed from, then the Consideration will have great Weight and Efficacy. *Deliver me, O God, out of the Hand of the wicked, the unrighteous and cruel One! for Thou, O Lord God, art the Thing that I long for*; q. d. "Deliver me, O God, " from the Snares and Artifices, from the " Temptations and Assaults of the wicked " One, that he prevail not against me, nor " cast me down by causing me to sin against " Thee; for Thou knowest, O Lord, that " Thou only art the Object of my Love; " that I long for nothing but to enjoy Thee, " and desire nothing but to please Thee. If " therefore my Love to Thee have any Pow- " er with Thee; if my Desire to serve and " glorify Thee, have any Weight with Thee; " if my Longing after the Enjoyment of " Thee, be of any Consideration with Thee, " incline thine Ear to me, and hearken to " my Prayer, and deliver me from the Sub- " tilty, and Malice, and Power of my spiri- " tual Enemy; who by soliciting me to sin, " labours to make me thine Enemy, to dis- " honour Thee, and to lose the Possession of " Thee.

My Text, I own, is differently rendred in the new Translation in our Bibles, instead of *Thou, O Lord God, art the Thing that I long for*; it is said, *Thou art my Hope, O Lord God*; but besides that this is the same with what follows, *Thou art my Trust from*
my

my Youth, the Hebrew Lexicographers assure us, that the Verb *Kava*, from whence the Noun in the Text is derived, signifies, *Magno animi desiderio in aliquem intentum esse, & respicere, & ex eo pendere; ac observant, de animi & voluntatis motu, & inclinatione, proprie dici*; to look and be intent upon any one with great (and earnest) Desire, and (as it were) to depend (wholly) upon him; and they observe that this Word is properly used to signify the Motion and Inclination of the Soul and Will; which is a sufficient Justification of the old Translation in our Common Prayer Books, and shews that the Original is there rendred with great Justice and Propriety, when it reads, *Thou, O Lord, art the Thing that I long for.*

From these Words thus considered, we may learn from the Example of holy *David* in this Passage, these Things following; which would be of infinite Use and Advantage to us.

I. In all Afflictions to have Recourse to God.

II. To desire and pray for Deliverance out of them for spiritual Ends, for the Glory of God and the good of our Souls.

III. As the most effectual Motive we can urge on our Parts, to incline the divine Majesty to hear our Prayers, to make God the supreme Object of our Love, and to be able

to

to say to Him with Truth and Sincerity,
*Thou, O Lord God, art the Thing that I
long for.*

I. First then we ought to learn in all Afflictions to have Recourse to God.

There are three Things, which if well considered, will clearly shew us the Necessity of having Recourse to God in all Afflictions.

1. The Duties proper to a State of Affliction.

2. The Temptations peculiar to a State of Affliction.

3. The Weakness of our meer natural Powers, whereby we are unable of our selves to perform the Duties, or to resist the Temptations, without the particular Assistance of God's Grace and holy Spirit.

1. The Duties proper to a State of Affliction are chiefly these, Patience, Resignation, and Hope, or Trust in God.

Patience is the bearing the Afflictions God sends, for God's sake, with Contentedness, nay, with Chearfulness and Thankfulness. The Grounds and Reasons of this Duty are, that Afflictions are not only the Effects of God's Justice, but of his Mercy: Suffering is the natural and necessary Consequence of Sin; it is therefore but just in God, to let us reap as we have sowed, to make us eat the Labours of our own Hands, and taste the Fruits of that Root of Bitterness, which we

our

our selves have planted. Therefore we ought with the lowest Humility and Submission, patiently and contentedly to take all our Sufferings in Penitence, and accept them at God's Hands as a Penance injoynd us for our Sins; and we should say with the holy Prophets, *^a Why should a living Man complain, a Man for the Punishment of his Sins? and ^b I will bear the Indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.*

But Afflictions are not only the Effects of God's Justice, but of his Mercy and Goodness also, and therefore ought to be received not only with Patience and Contentedness, but with Cheerfulness and Thanksgiving. They are Marks and Characters of our Legitimacy, of our being God's Children, not Bastards but Sons, and they are the Tokens of God's fatherly Love to us and Care for us. They are the Lineaments and Features of God's beloved Son, and there is no other Way of being accepted and beloved of the Father, but by being like, and *made conformable to the Image of his Son.* Afflictions, in St. Paul's Stile, *are the Marks of Jesus Christ;* the Way of the Cross is the High Road to Heaven, the Way which the Captain of our Salvation trod, and marked out for us by his Blood, *with whom if we suffer here, we shall reign with Glory in Heaven hereafter.* And thus our Church teaches her

^a Lam. iii. 39.^b Mich. vii. 9.

Children,

Children, in the Exhortation in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, where she says, that the Passage in the twelfth Chapter of St. *Paul* to the *Hebrews* " Was written for
 " our Comfort and Instruction, that we
 " should *patiently and with Thanksgiving* bear
 " our heavenly Father's Correction, whenso-
 " ever by any Manner of Adversity it shall
 " please his gracious Goodness to visit us;
 " and there should be no greater Comfort to
 " Christian Persons, than to be made like
 " unto Christ, by suffering patiently Adversities, Troubles, and Sickneses; for he himself went not up to Joy, but first he suffered Pain; he entered not into his Glory before he was crucified: So truly our Way to eternal Joy, is to suffer here with Christ; and our Door into eternal Life, is gladly to dye with Christ, that we may rise again from Death, and dwell with him in everlasting Life.

The next Duty proper to a State of Affliction, is Resignation.

Resignation is the giving up our selves, Souls and Bodies, all that we have and are to God, to be disposed of by him to his Glory according to his good Pleasure; it is to conform our Will to God's Will, to will what he wills, to chuse what he chuses, and to accept what he orders for us, and sends to us, whether Prosperity or Adversity, Sicknes or Health, Life or Death. But a State of Affliction is the proper Trial of this

Virtue. The proper Object of Resignation, and the Matter about which it is conversant, are Things to which we have an Aversion and Repugnancy; for what Virtue is it to be resigned to God's Will, when every Thing happens according to our own? But if in Things that are contrary to our Inclinations, we sacrifice our Will to God's Will, then indeed we make an Offering worthy of God, and highly acceptable and agreeable to him; it is therefore more particularly incumbent upon us in a State of Affliction freely and voluntarily to resign and offer up our selves to God, to bear as much, and as long as his infinite Wisdom shall see fit; being assured that he will never lay more upon us than we are able to bear: And after the great Examples of Resignation in holy Scripture, we should say, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him Good. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord; and thy Will not mine be done;* and this we may do with the full and free Consent of our Spirits, notwithstanding the Repugnancy and Reluctancy of our Flesh, or sensitive Nature; for *the Spirit may be willing, though the Flesh be weak.*

And the Ground and Reason of this Duty is this, that we are not our own, we are God's, and he has an absolute and supreme Authority and Dominion over us, not only by right of Creation, but also by that of Purchase and Redemption; and consequently has, and ought

ought to have, an absolute and uncontrollable right to dispose of his own as he sees good. And thus God himself, in his holy Word, asserts his own Right to dispose of Mankind as he pleases, and to order for every one, what State and Condition he thinks fit, *Isa. xlv. 9. Shall the Clay say to him that fashioneth it, what makest thou? Jer. xviii. 6. O House of Israel, cannot I do with you as this Potter, saith the Lord? Behold, as the Clay is in the Potter's Hand, so are ye in mine Hand, saith the Lord. Rom. ix. 20, 21. Shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter Power over the Clay of the same Lump, to make one Vessel unto Honour, and another to Dishonour? Does not the Apostle tell us, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. that we are not our own, but that we are bought with a Price; and therefore ought to glorify God both in our Bodies and Spirits, because they are both his? And what is this Price we were bought with, why no less than the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Blood of God? And St. Paul tells us, 2 Cor. v. 15. that Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them; and Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9. No Man liveth unto himself, and no Man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we dye, we dye unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or dye, we are the*

Lord's; for to this End Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

So that not to resign up our selves to God, in and for all States and Conditions, whether of Prosperity or Adversity, Sickness or Health, Life or Death, is in effect to dispute God's Sovereignty with him; it is to defraud Him of the Tribute of Glory we owe Him; and as much as in us lies to rob Him of his Right as Creator, and of the Purchase of his Blood as Redeemer.

The last Duty I mentioned as proper to a State of Affliction, is Hope, or Trust in God.

Hope, or Trust in God, is a firm Expectation of Good from God, or a steady and unshaken Reliance upon God for Good; not indeed for any particular Good, which we might ignorantly and erroneously fancy to be such; but for that which the unerring Wisdom of God sees and knows to be good for us; and the proper Time for the Exercise and Trial of this Grace, is a State of Affliction. There seems to be no great Virtue in trusting in God, when we enjoy all we wish for or desire; this Virtue is eclipsed, and almost disappears, in the Sunshine of Prosperity. But in a State of great Affliction, when all Things about us look gloomy and dismal, and we are surrounded on all Sides with what the World and Nature call Evils, and what we our selves, perhaps

perhaps through our Darkneſs and Ignorance may account ſo too. When Things ſeem deſperate, when there is no Help in Man, and even God himſelf ſeems to have forſaken us; then in the dark tempeſtuous Night of Adverſity, this glorious Grace of Hope ſhines with a peculiar Brightneſs and Luſtre; and, like the *Polar Star* to the diſtreſſed Pilot, enlightens and comforts, guides and ſupports him; preſerves him from ſplitting upon the Rocks of Impatience and Irreſignation, and keeps him from ſinking by Deſpair.

Besides, the Exerciſe of this Virtue in ſuch Trials, is not more beneficial to Men, than it is glorious for God; for thus to truſt in God againſt all Appearances, to hope even againſt Hope it ſelf, to expect and rely upon it, that God, as in a new Creation, will bring Light out of Darkneſs, Good out of Evil, and Happineſs out of our Miſery; is to honour and acknowledge God as God indeed; and to pay ſovereign Homage to his ſovereign Perfections. And this will appear moſt highly reaſonable, when we reflect upon the Grounds and Reaſons of our practiſing this Virtue; which are, the Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs of God; by his Wiſdom he knows, by his Power he effects, by his Goodneſs he wills and chuſes, not only what is good, but what is beſt for us, though it may not appear ſo to our ſhort ſighted Reaſon; for Afflictions,

though seeming Evils, are real Goods, they are wholesome though unpleasant; the Cup of Affliction, like the bitter Draught, does both purify and strengthen us; it purges out the old Leaven of Selfishness, Self-will and Self-love, and strengthens our Hope, and Charity; and serves to fit and prepare us for, and to enable us to bear, the Enjoyment and Communication of God.

Besides, God is not only infinitely good in himself, but he stands in such Relations to Mankind, as should raise in them the firmest Expectation and the highest Confidence of receiving Good from Him. God is our Father, and we are his Children and Sons, and He loves Mankind with a Love as infinitely exceeding the greatest Affection any earthly Parent can bear towards his best beloved Son, as God is greater than Man; but he is not only our Creator, but our Redeemer too, and did not only give us our Being, but gave himself for us: *He then that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall not he with him also freely give us all Things?*

Thus then we ought in all Afflictions, either inward or outward, either bodily or spiritual, when our Circumstances are most deplorable and desperate, to have the firmest Trust and Confidence in God; *to cast all our Care upon Him, for He careth for us, in all our sufferings according to the Will of God, to commit the keeping of our Souls*

to

to Him, in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator; for it is good that a Man should both hope, and quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord^a. And we should imitate the admirable Examples of this blessed Virtue recorded in holy Scripture; the one, the holy Job, who says, *though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him*; the other, the Holy of Holies, the blessed Jesus, who expiring in Agonies of Soul and Body upon the Cross, and under a Sense, and seeming Dereliction, and being forsaken of God his Father; yet exerts an Act of the highest Trust and Confidence in God, in his very last Breath, saying, *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit*.

These are the three Duties proper to, and necessary for a State of Affliction.

2. Let us now, *secondly*, observe the Temptations peculiar to such a State; and they are Temptations to the Vices opposite to the Virtues I have been recommending; the Temptations to Impatience, Irresignation, and Despondency or Distrust; great and heinous Sins all, and highly injurious and offensive to God; and yet such, to which through the Weakness of our Nature, and the Sollicitations of the Devil, Men are most liable to at such Times and in such Circumstances: Which leads me to the

^a Lam. iii. 26.

3^d Consideration, viz. the Weakness of our natural Powers, whereby we are unable of our selves to perform the Duties, or resist the Temptations, without the particular Assistance of God's Grace and holy Spirit.

These Duties are above the Power of meer Nature, nay, they are contrary to it, they are supernatural, and we must have a supernatural Strength to perform them. There is nothing which our corrupt Nature abhors so much as sufferings, from whence we are naturally tempted to be impatient and untiesigned under it; therefore there must be an higher Principle and Strength than Nature, to make us run counter to Nature, to make us contentedly, chearfully, and willingly, suffer, what we are naturally averse to. Again, nothing is more natural to corrupted Nature, than to depend wholly upon its natural Reason; and therefore, Men naturally give over all Hope, when there is no rational Grounds of Hope left; but divine Hope and Trust does then begin, when all human Hopes fail, and goes beyond, and exceeds all Reason, and makes a Man *hope even against Hope it self*; which being so much above Nature, can be the Work of nothing but a supernatural Power.

Thus you see the absolute Necessity there is of having Recourse to God in all Afflictions; of pouring out our Hearts before Him, and praying to Him continually, fervently,

vently, and importunately; to endue us with the Grace and Strength of his holy Spirit, to enable us to resist the Temptations, and to make us practise the Virtues and Duties proper to a State of Affliction, Patience, Resignation and Trust, in order to make our Sufferings turn to His Glory and our Good. I proceed now to the

II. Second Thing, which we are to learn from the Example of the holy *David* in the Passage of my Text, *viz.* to desire and pray for Deliverance out of our Afflictions, for spiritual Ends, for the Glory of God, and the Good of our Souls.

It is true, Nature desires nothing but to be eased of Trouble, and to be released from Pain; but we ought to correct Nature by Grace, and to desire Deliverance out of Afflictions, no otherwise than as it may be for the Glory of God and the Good of our Souls, by freeing us from the Danger of falling into any of those Sins, which a State of Affliction is most liable and exposed to; but Nature is very subtle and apt to impose upon us, and make us believe that we desire and pray for Freedom from our Calamities, for spiritual Ends, when it is really for temporal Ones, and not with a View to God's Glory but our own Ease; but we may discover whether this be so or no, by our Resignation, or the Want of it.

If

If our Prayers for Deliverance are made with a quiet Resignation to the Will of God, either to be granted or denied as He sees good, desiring nothing but in his Will, and that his Will may be done, then we may be assured we seek only his Glory in our Desires of Deliverance; but if we desire Deliverance eagerly, impatiently, and unquietly, it is an infallible Sign we seek nothing but the Ease of Nature, not the Glory of God and the Good of our Souls.

Now this is a poor low End, unworthy of a Christian, who while he was a Sinner and an Enemy, was reconciled to God, by the Sufferings of his Son: Is it not shameful and base in a Sinner to pretend to Freedom from temporal Punishment, when he knows he deserves eternal Torments? And is it not ungenerous for a Christian to flinch and draw back, and refuse to follow in the Path his Lord and Master, his God and Saviour, has walked in before him? and when he has suffered infinitely for our Sakes, to be unwilling to suffer any Thing for his? it betrays a base and ignoble Spirit, and is highly injurious and offensive to God; and we may be assured such Prayers will never be heard, and such Requests never be granted. Which leads me naturally to the

III. Third Point of my Discourse, which was this, that as the most effectual Motive

we

we can urge on our Parts, to incline the divine Majesty to hear our Prayers in a State of Affliction, we should make God the supreme Object of our Love, and be able to say to Him with Truth and Sincerity, *Thou, O Lord God, art the Thing that I long for.*

To make God the supreme Object of our Love, is to love God above all Things, and above our selves; to love Him above Beauty, Strength, Health, Wealth, Life, Pleasure, and Happiness; and freely to sacrifice any, or all of these to Him when He calls for them; it is in all Things, and at all Times to do his Will, not our own, to desire his Pleasure, not our own; to seek his Glory, not our own; it is to desire above all Things to be pure, and righteous, and holy, in order to please Him, and be acceptable in his Sight; it is to delight in obeying Him, in doing his Will and keeping his Commandments; it is to delight in being in his Presence, to think upon, and converse with Him perpetually in our Hearts, by devout Prayer and Meditation; it is to desire that His Name may be hallowed, that He may be glorified by all intelligent Creatures; that His Kingdom may come, that His holy Spirit may in all Things direct and rule our Hearts; and this His holy Will may be done by Men on Earth, with the same Readiness and Willingness, the same chearful Duty and Obedience,

bedience, as it is by the holy Angels in Heaven; it is to desire to know as much as ever we can of God in this Life by Faith, and to long after the clear Sight and perfect Enjoyment of Him in Heaven; in a Word, it is to make it the very End of our Being, to give our selves wholly up to God to be disposed of by Him, in Time and to Eternity, to his greatest Glory. This is to make God the supreme Object of our Love.

Now when we can truly say thus unto God, O Lord, thou knowest, that it is not Riches that I covet, it is not Honour that I am ambitious of, it is not Pleasure that I pursue, it is not my Ease that I seek; *but Thou, O Lord God, art the Thing that I long for*; it is the Pleasure of pleasing Thee that I pursue; it is the Honour of glorifying Thee that I am ambitious of; it is the possessing and enjoying Thee in Heaven that is the Treasure I covet; it is the Uneasiness of offending Thee that I would avoid: When a Man can say this with Truth to God, he may be infallibly certain that God will hear his Prayer.

But how, and in what Manner will God hear his Prayer? Will He grant him the very particular Thing he prays for; and immediately deliver him out of the Affliction he lies under? No, it may be not; and yet He will hear his Prayer, and grant his Desire for all that.

For

For we may observe, that there is a two-fold Way of hearing, or answering a Prayer; an actual and a virtual One; the actual answering of a Prayer is the granting the very particular Thing prayed for, which is not always good for us, and does not always prove a Blessing to us: The virtual answering of a Prayer, is when God does not see fit to give us the particular Thing we pray for, but chuses for us, and gives us another Thing instead of it, which is much better for us, and does best answer our main Intention, and chief Desire in that Prayer.

Thus, if a Man that truly loves God and seeks his Glory, should pray to God to be delivered from an Affliction, for fear of being tempted to Impatience, or any other Sin an afflicted State is most liable to; it is plain, his principal Aim and chief Desire is the Glory of God and the Good of his Soul. Now though God should not actually grant the particular Request, and immediately set him free from the Affliction: Yet He would hear his Prayer and answer it most effectually, and in the best Manner, if He assisted him inwardly with his Grace and holy Spirit, and supported him under the Affliction; if He made him resist the Temptations, and practise the necessary Virtues; if He kept him from offending Him, and enabled him to please Him; and so made his Affliction an Instrument of his own

own greater Glory, and the Man's greater Good.

And in this Sense we are to understand that Passage in the *Psalmist*, *Psal. cxly. 19. He will fulfil the Desire of them that fear him*; because their Desire is conformed and united to His, and their Will to His; they desire what God desires, and will what He wills; and the Desire and Will both of God and Man are concentered and united in the Glory of God.

Thus, *a* all Things work together for good, to them that love God, all Things turn to their Advantage, and they glorify God in all Things; with such Persons Riches and Poverty, Abundance and Want, Honour and Dishonour, Health and Sickness, Life and Death; do equally conspire, through the Grace of the holy Spirit, to the Glory of God, and the Good of their Souls; for *b* all Things are theirs, whether the World, or Life, or Death, or Things present, or Things to come, all are theirs, because they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Since then the Virtue and Efficacy of this divine Grace of Charity, or the Love of God is so great as to turn all Things, the greatest Evils into Good, and like the Philosopher's Stone, which, as it is said, converts the coarsest Metals into Gold, turns Misery into Happiness, and Death into eter-

a Rom. viii. 28.

b 1 Cor. iii. 22.

nal Life; I cannot forbear shewing you the Process of this inestimable Secret, and mentioning to you the Methods and Means to acquire this invaluable Fund of heavenly Treasure, that is, of obtaining and acquiring the Love of God: And the Ways are chiefly these two, Meditation and Prayer.

First, We should seriously and frequently meditate upon the infinitely lovely Excellencies, Beauties, and Perfections of the divine Nature; upon the Wisdom, and Power, and more particularly upon the Goodness of God; and those wonderful and miraculous Effects of it, the Creation and Preservation of Mankind, and more especially the Miracle of Miracles of the divine Goodness and Mercy, the Redemption of Man by the Blood and Death of the Son of God; and thus, *while we are musing, the Fire of divine Love will kindle and flame in our Hearts.*

But because all Men are not capable of this Exercise; the next Method is more general, and indeed more effectual, and that is Prayer, constant, continual, fervent Prayer. We should have God always before our Eyes and in our Thoughts, and live under a perpetual Sense of his Presence every where, especially in our Souls, and be frequently and continually lifting up our Hearts in Prayer to Him all the Day long, and more particularly that He would *shed abroad his Love in our Hearts by his holy Spirit*;
that

that He would *put this Law of Love in our Hearts, and write it in our inward Parts*; that we may love Him, obey and glorify Him to all Eternity: That we may hereafter come to the Possession and Enjoyment of that God, we now long for.

the Love of God, the Love of our Neighbour, and the Love of ourself, are the three chief parts of the Christian's duty. We should love God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and love our Neighbour as ourselves. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is, that we should love ourself as we love God and our Neighbour. These three loves are the foundation of all Christian duty. If we love God, we shall love His commandments, and we shall love our Neighbour as we love God. If we love ourself, we shall love God and our Neighbour as we love ourself. If we love our Neighbour, we shall love God and ourself as we love our Neighbour. These three loves are the foundation of all Christian duty. If we love God, we shall love His commandments, and we shall love our Neighbour as we love God. If we love ourself, we shall love God and our Neighbour as we love ourself. If we love our Neighbour, we shall love God and ourself as we love our Neighbour. These three loves are the foundation of all Christian duty.

SERMON



SERMON XII.

*The good Dispositions necessary
in order to make the Word be-
come fruitful in us, together
with their contrary Indisposi-
tions.*

LUKE VIII. 15.

*But that on good Ground, are they,
which in an honest and good Heart,
having heard the Word, keep it, and
bring forth Fruit with Patience.*

THAT preaching the Word of God is
an Ordinance of God, and a Means of
Salvation, is very evident from God's
Word. Now as God is infinitely wise and
powerful,

powerful, the Means prescribed, and ordained by God for any End, must be wise and powerful Means, *i. e.* proper and effectual for attaining the End : And to suppose otherwise is to suppose Wisdom to be Folly, and Power to be Weakness.

If this be the Case, How comes it then to pass, that this so powerful a Means has so universally lost its Power and Efficacy ? That the generality of Men still go on in the Ways of Sin and Perdition, notwithstanding their constant Use of the Means of Grace and Salvation ? How comes it to pass that Men are no Ways bettered in Heart or Life, that their Consciences are not rous'd, their Affections are not moved, their Understandings are not enlightned, nor their Hearts warmed, nor their Lives reformed by all the *Sermons* which they hear ? Whence is it, I say, that *our preaching is so much in vain, and the Word of God of none effect ?*

A Fault there is, undoubtedly, somewhere, but where ever it is, that it is not in God, I hope you will allow. He is the same Almighty God, and his Word the same *quick, powerful, and penetrating Word* that ever it was. The Fault then must necessarily lie either in the *Preachers* or the *Hearers*. For as Seed sown may prove unfruitful either from the natural Indisposition and Barrenness of the Soil, or from the Indisposition of the Medium, the Cloudiness and Thickness of the Air, which should but does not convey and transmit, pure and strong, the enlivening and prolifick Light and Heat of the Sun to the Earth ; the Sun remaining still in itself, and in its own Nature the Source
and

and Fountain of all genial Warmth and Fruitfulness: So the good Seed of the Word of God may become unfruitful either from the Indisposition of the Hearers, or the Indisposition of those who minister to them: Who, if they be clouded either with Ignorance or Vice, intercept instead of conveying that spiritual Heat and Light, which they should receive from God and transmit to the Hearts of their Hearers; which doubtless must be no little hindrance to the Efficacy of the Word: God still remaining always able and always willing to accompany his holy Word with the Power of his Holy Spirit, and to make it operative and fruitful in our Hearts and Lives.

As to the Defects of the Dispensers of the Word, it is not at all necessary to enlarge upon them: It would not become me, nor would it benefit you. For observe this, and remember it well, The greatest Fault, when the Word of God is unfruitful, always lies in the Hearers.

For tho' a Man spoke *with the Tongue of Men and Angels*, and *had all Knowledge and Utterance*, and were endued with all the Gifts and Graces necessary to make him *rightly divide* or distribute *the Word of Truth*, nay, tho' he were an inspired Apostle; yet were his Hearers indisposed, his preaching would be without Effect. As Seed sown upon a Rock would never bear Fruit, tho' the Air were never so clear and well disposed, and the Sun darted his Beams never so strongly thro' it upon the barren Stone. Nay, *He that spake as never Man spake*, the blessed Jesus, *the Power*

and Wisdom of God, did not make a Conquest of all those that heard *the gracious Words that proceeded out of his divine Mouth*. The Gospels give us an express Account of but very few who were converted by the Eloquence of Heaven, and the Preaching of God. And this most certainly for Want of a proper Disposition in the Hearts of his Hearers. Hence we may infallibly conclude, that if the *Word preached does not profit*, it is because it is *not mixed with Faith* and other necessary Dispositions, *in them that hear it*.

The whole Parable, of which my Text is the Conclusion, was spoke by our blessed Lord on purpose to shew Men the several Indispositions and Obstacles that hinder them from receiving and retaining the Word and bringing forth the Fruits of it; as also the good Dispositions that are necessarily to be in us, in order to make the Word of God fruitful in our Hearts and Lives: All under the natural and lively Emblem of Seed sown, which either miscarried or brought forth Fruit to Perfection according to the different Nature and Disposition of the Soil on which it fell. *That on the good Ground, are they, which in an honest and good Heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with patience.*

From these Words it will be proper to consider the good Dispositions that are necessary to be in those that hear the Word of God in order to make it become fruitful, and produce its proper Effect in their Hearts and Lives: And likewise take notice of the Indispositions

dispositions which render the Word unfruitful.

The good Dispositions mentioned in the Text may be reduced to these three.

I. The Dispositions that ought to proceed or go before our hearing the Word.

II. The Dispositions that ought to accompany it.

III. The Dispositions that ought to follow it.

I. We will consider the good Dispositions that are necessary to be found in us before hearing the Word, signified in the Text by *an honest and good Heart*.

A good Heart is a Heart that desires, *delights in*, and constantly endeavours to do *that which is good*. Now there being nothing *good but God*, and what comes from God, and is conformable to the Will of God: A *good Heart* then must be a Heart, whose supreme, ruling, and governing Desire and Resolution it is to do the Will of God, whenever and howsoever made known to it; without regarding whether it be sweet or better, crucifying or gratifying to Nature, being only solicitous for doing *the good and acceptable Will of God*, not considering or valuing the Pleasure or Pain that may attend the doing of it. This I call a *good Heart*, and it is so good that I do not know a better.

This is the proper Disposition of Heart for benefitting by hearing the Word of God. It is a necessary Qualification for learning any Art or Science whatsoever, to desire and resolve to follow its Rules, and practice its Precepts as soon as known. And without all doubt the

very best Disposition to benefit by hearing the Word is to desire and resolve to do it.

For he that has no other Desire and Design, no other End and Intention in Life but to do the Will of God, must of necessity be as desirous to know it, as he is to do it. And the more desirous he is to know the Will of God, the more easy Access will all spiritual Instruction find to his Heart, and the more welcome and agreeable it will be to him. Such a Man's Heart lies open to Instruction, it longs for it and thirsts after it, and when it comes, it is as acceptable to it as refreshing Showers to a dry Land. Such a one is easy to be convinced of his Duty; nay, he is quick sighted and forward enough to spy it out himself. And when he once knows it, he will certainly remember it, and by the Assistance of God's Grace will not either by Pleasure or by Pain be diverted from doing it.

This the *Jews* knew very well to be the readiest Way to come at the Knowledge of the the Will of God. And therefore when they applied themselves to the Prophet *Jeremiah* to know God's Will concerning their going into the Land *Egypt*, they assured him they came to him thus disposed, That *whether it were Good, or whether it were Evil, they would obey the Voice of the Lord their God* ^a i. e. They were resolved to do the Will of God, whether it were pleasing or displeasing, whether agreeable or contrary to their own Will and Inclination.

* Jer. xlii. 6.

Nay, our blessed Lord assures us that this Temper of Mind and Disposition of Heart is the best Means to discern the Truth, and to avoid all dangerous Errors in religious Doctrines, whether speculative or practical: Saying, *John vii. 17. If any Man will do God's Will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God.* If any Man will do his Will *ἐὰν τις θέλει*, the Force of which Word in the Original extends thus far, If any Man desires, loves, delights, wills, resolves to do the Will of God; such a Man certainly is best qualified, even in the Nature of Things, as well as from the infallible Promise of divine Assistance, to distinguish between the Doctrine of God, and the Doctrine of Men, to discern, by the Taste of his Heart, between that which favours of the Flesh and that which favours of the Spirit, between the Directions of Grace, and the Dictates of corrupt Nature.

This good Heart, then, is the good Ground on which the good Seed of the Word being sown, proves fruitful. For having in it a Spirit natural and congenial to the Seed, of a prolifick Quality, tending to shoot forth and exert itself in Action; and being warmed with the kindly Influences of *the Sun of Righteousness*, and watered with *the Dew of Heaven*, the Grace of the Holy Spirit, it brings forth the Fruits of the Spirit in the Man's Life and Conversation.

The *Indisposition* contrary to this good Disposition is that of a Heart which seeks nothing in Life but to please itself, and to do its own Will. This certainly is an evil Disposition, it

is the Root and Source of all Evil in us and to us.

This is represented in the Parable by the Ground over-run with Thorns, which choked the good Seed and made it miscarry^a. The Vices and Passions, which Men of this Character will always give themselves up to, make such a noise, hurry, and confusion in the Soul that it cannot listen to, and hear the Voice of God. They cloud the Understanding so, that it is not capable of discerning the Truth, and discovering the Will of God and their Duty. They engage the Affections so as to hate whatever is contrary or disagreeable to them. They pervert and harden the Will so as to refuse to do any Thing but what is pleasant to it. So that such Men are prejudiced against the Truth. They are obstinate, and hard to be convinced of their Duty, because they do not like it. They do not desire to know the Will of God, because they do not desire to do it. How should such a Temper as this Benefit by hearing the Word, which comes as it were armed against it? How should such Men hear and see the Truth, whose Ears are stopped and whose Eyes are shut? If by chance any Thing they hear in a Sermon should make a light Impression upon them, it is presently overwhelmed and stifled by Business, Diversions, Pleasures, and the Care of getting or keeping Riches; its weak tendency is immediately overpowered by the Strength of the Passions of Covetousness, Ambition, and

^a Luke viii. 7.

Lust. Thus our blessed Master tells us, *That which fell among Thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with Cares, and Riches, and Pleasures of this Life, and bring no Fruit to perfection*^a.

These were the great Obstacles that hinder the *Jews* from profiting by the Preaching even of the Son of God. What other Reason was it that made the young Man in the Gospel forsake the Saviour of the World, and reject the Words of eternal Life, but Covetousness; and that his Love of Money was greater than his Love of God? What made him disobey the Will of God, but that God's Will was disagreeable and contrary to his own? What was it that made the *Pharisees* deride him whom they should have adored, and reject the Counsel of God against themselves^b, and resist the divine Truth which ought to have penetrated and persuaded them, but Covetousness^c? What was it that hindered the *Jews* from believing in Christ, but the Vanity and Ambition of having Praise and Honour from Men, which they thought they should entirely lose, if they followed and embraced a Person and Doctrine so universally rejected and despised, especially by the great ones? ^d *How can ye believe, says our blessed Lord, which receive honour one of another?* ^e Our Saviour speaks of it, you see, as a Kind of Impossibility. Nay, tho' many of the leading Men among the *Jews* were inwardly convinced, yet

^a Luke viii. 14. ^b Luke vii. 30. ^c Luke xvi. 14. ^d John vii. 48.
^e John v. 44.

this wretched Passion of ambitious Vanity stifled their Conviction, so that they durst not openly own and avow it : It choked their Faith, so that it could not exert itself and spring up into Confession and suitable Works. For thus the holy Evangelist informs us, that tho' even *among the chief Rulers, many believed on him, yet because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue, for they loved the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God^a.* That is, they valued the Esteem of Men more than they did the Glory of God.

Now as it is impossible for the Seed sown to spring up and bring forth Fruit, unless the Briars and Thorns be stub'd up and rooted out ; and the Soil be cleared and left free and open, and so in a Condition to exert that Spirit and Vigour in fructifying the Seed, which it wasted in nourishing those noxious Shrubs that choked it : So the Soul, before it can profit by hearing the Word and bring forth the Fruits thereof, must certainly be cleared of and freed from those Passions and Vices which choke and stifle the Convictions of Conscience, and make it employ all that Strength and Vigour in pleasing itself and doing its own Will, which it ought to exert in pleasing and doing the Will of God.

This then is the first requisite in order to our being benefited by hearing the Word of God, *viz. A good Heart ;* that is, a sincere and

^a John xii. 41, 43.

earnest Desire, and fixed Resolution to do the Will of God, when known.

The next good Disposition, necessary to go before our hearing the Word, is expressed in the Text, by an *honest Heart*.

An honest heart, when applied to the Matter we are speaking of, signifies an Heart clear of all Hypocrisy, and endued with Sincerity of Intention; a Heart, whose only Design in coming to hear the Word of God, is to learn and be instructed in its Duty, and the Will of God, in order to do it.

Hence then it follows, that they are ill disposed for profiting by the Word, who come to hear it out of Curiosity, and for the Sake of the Fame and Reputation of the Preacher. These Men are admirers of what they call Ingenuity, Wit and Brightness in a Discourse; but are nauseated at, and disgusted with plain and simple Truths, plainly expressed, tho' never so solid and useful. They come for Pleasure, not for Profit; not to hear the Word of God, but the Harangues of Men; not for the Cure of their spiritual Distempers, but to have their *itching Ears* scratched; not to have their Conscience informed, but to have their Fancies entertained; and when the Entertainment is over, not one Syllable of it do they remember, never do they think of it, or mind it more.

This is so far from the *honest Heart* of the Text, that it is in the Sight of God downright Hypocrisy. And of such Men it is that God complains to the Prophet, *Ezek. 33. 31, 32. They come unto thee as the People come,*
m.th,

meth, and they sit before thee as my People. i. e. Like those who have given up themselves to me, to serve me, and to do my Will: *And they hear thy Words, but they will not do them: For, with their mouth they shew much love. i. e.* In coming to hear my Word, they seem to make great Professions of Reverence and Duty to me, *but their Heart goeth after their Covetousness.* Their Hearts are wedded to their Lusts and Passions, so that they will not obey my Will, which is contrary to them, tho' they know it. *And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely Song of one that hath a pleasant Voice, and can play well on an Instrument; for they hear thy Words, but they do them not.*

But the curious Hearers of our Days, go a Step further. They don't come to Sermons to hear their own Duty, but to see how the Preacher performs his: They don't now-a-days, as in the Prophet's Time, sit before the Preacher as Learners; but he rather stands before them as his Judges. But when the Scholars will pretend to instruct their Masters, and they who are to be taught, will take upon them to teach their Teachers, there's an End of all Proficiency. For, undoubtedly, Ignorance must be the Effect, as it was the Cause of such a Proceeding.

In much the same Case are the Hearers that come out of Custom, because it is the Fashion, and to avoid the Imputation of Singularity. These, certainly, are far from having an *honest Heart* and sincere Intention in hearing the Word.

Word. For they come not so much to be instructed what they ought to do, as to do as others do; not out of Reverence to God, but out of Regard to Men; not out of a Sense of Religion, but of worldly Shame. And therefore tho' they are present in Body, they are absent in Spirit; and their Hearts are full of, and indulge themselves in the Thoughts of their sinful Pleasures, whilst they should be employed in Attention to Exhortations and Instructions to mortify them and renounce them.

Another great Indisposition for benefiting by the Word, and which is contrary to an *honest Heart*, is Prejudice against the Preacher. We ought to come prepared to hear the Word of God with the greatest Equalness and Impartiality; and, according to the excellent Advice of *Thomas à Kempis*, mind and consider *what is said, not who it is that says it*. A prejudiced Mind is like a Rock without any Earth at all upon it; the Seed that is cast upon it can't be so much as received into it. It is one of the strongest Obstacles imaginable against admitting the Truth, and, therefore with the utmost Caution and Diligence to be avoided by an honest Mind. The Prejudices of the Jews against our blessed Lord hardned them against Conviction; so that the very Wisdom and Power of God could not work upon them. But,

2. *Secondly*. Let us consider the Dispositions that ought to accompany the hearing of the Word: And they are diligent Attention and fervent Prayer. Diligent Attention, as the utmost

most we can contribute, on our Part, to the understanding and receiving the Truth; and fervent Prayer to God, for the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, to open our Hearts, to enlighten our Minds, to bring Home to our Consciences, and to imprint upon our Spirits the Truths that do more immediately concern us, and are more particularly necessary for us, as being the proper Requisite, on God's Part, to make the Word become fruitful in us. For, let who will *sow*, or *plant*, or *water*, it must be *God* only that *gives the Encrease*. And these two Conditions we shall surely sincerely perform, if we come to hear the Word with the foregoing necessary Preparations of an *honest and good Heart*, that desires and intends nothing but to know the Will of God, in Order to do it. But if we are careless, or negligent in our Attention, or Prayers, how is it possible the Word should make any Impression, or have any good Effect upon us? If Men come with no more serious Preparation of Heart to a Sermon, than they do to a Play, it is no Wonder they reap no more spiritual Profit from the one, than from the other. Certainly, the great Reason why Men go from Sermons no better than they came, is because they don't come better prepared and disposed to hear them. Come we now in the

3. *Third Place* to consider the Dispositions that ought to *follow* the hearing of the Word, in order to make it fruitful. These are expressed in the Text, by those who having heard the Word, *keep it*, and bring forth Fruit with

Pati-

Patience. So that these two Dispositions are necessary to follow the Hearing of the Word, *Retentiveness* to keep it in Mind, and *Patience*, to give it Time, Leisure and Opportunity to bring forth Fruit to Perfection.

First, As to remembring what we have heard, and keeping it in Mind; tho' this may seem to depend upon a natural Faculty, which it is not in our Power to alter: Yet, as all the Faculties may be wonderfully improved by Use and Exercise; so likewise the Will has an absolute Command and Influence over them all, even the Understanding and Memory too. Whatever is uppermost in our Heart, will still be uppermost in our Thoughts; and there is no surer Way of knowing what a Man likes and loves most of what he reads, or hears, than to observe what he remembers best. So that the true Reason why Men remember so little of what they hear of their Duty, is, because they have no great Liking to it, and no Desire or Inclination to practise it. In spiritual Matters, a bad Memory will be found rooted in an evil Will. For, as Men never forget what they truly love, and constantly keep in Mind what they think of the last Importance to them; so it is a certain Sign, not of the Badness of our Memory, but of our Heart, of the Corruption of our Judgment and Will, when we are so apt to forget what it concerns us above all Things to remember.

Not that Men are obliged; for they are not able to remember every thing that is said in a Discourse from the Pulpit. But this I think
their

their bounden Duty in this Case, *not to let slip*, but carefully to treasure up those Things that do most sensibly touch and affect their Hearts, or smite their Consciences. These are the Things we may be sure that most particularly concern us, and are most useful and necessary for us, being such as the infinitely wise and good Spirit of God has chose more particularly to impress upon our Hearts; and therefore ought most carefully to be attended to, and faithfully remembered by us as the Will of God.

Now the Way to bring our Memories to retain better what concerns us, is first to endeavour after the blessed Dispositions above-mentioned, of an *honest and good Heart*. For, if it be the chief Desire and Delight of our Souls to do the Will of God, we shall certainly as earnestly desire to know it, as to do it; and we shall as earnestly desire to remember it, as to know it; and whatever we earnestly desire, if it be in the Compass of our Power, we shall certainly find the Way to accomplish.

The other Means to retain and keep in Mind the Truths that are useful to us, which also depends upon the Foundation of an *honest and good Heart*, is to endeavour to live an inward and recollected Life, to restrain our Thoughts from running Riot, and wandering perpetually all over the Earth, and to confine them to the Presence of God, and the present Duty and Business that is before us, to admit no vain, or merely amusing, much less sinful Thoughts.

Thoughts. And to this Purpose to keep a strict Guard and Watch at the Doors of the Senses, to suffer nothing but what is good or innocent to enter by them and pass into the Soul. This is like fencing and enclosing the Ground, and watching it continually ; which is certainly the only Way to preserve the Seed either from being trodden under Foot by every Comer and Goer, or from being devoured by the Fowls of the Air.

Thus, if we enclose and guard our Heart, and do not suffer it to lie open and in common, and exposed to every Temptation that our Senses present, or the Devil suggests to it, we shall keep and retain the good Seed of the Word, till it brings forth Fruit.

The contrary loose, dissipated, and unguarded Temper is represented in the Parable by the Seed *which fell by the Way Side, and was trodden down, and was devoured by the Fowls of the Air* *. What wonder such a Man should let the Word be stolen away out of his Heart, when he suffers Temptations to steal his very Heart away ?

Secondly, Patience is necessary to make the Word we have heard become fruitful. To which it is necessary in several Respects.

First, It is necessary in order to prepare the Soil, and to bring our Minds to that Temper of *an honest and good Heart*, the giving up our Wills to the Will of God ; which, like the good Quality of the Soil, is the proper good

* Luke viii. 5.

Disposition of Heart for fructifying the good Seed of the Word. How often must the Earth be broken and torn up by the Plough-share in order to prepare it for Seed ? And what Sufferings and Contradictions must we with Patience undergo, before our Wills can be broke and made submissive and pliable to the Will of God ? Without which we cannot profit by hearing of the Word, because we should not do the Will of God tho' we knew it.

Secondly, Patience is necessary to the fructifying of the Word, as it is necessary in order to enable us to stand the Shocks and Attacks we may meet with in the Road of our Duty, and doing the Will of God. If we *set our selves to serve the Lord, we must prepare our Souls for Temptation*. If we would be truly good, and in all Things do the good Will of God, we must expect no other than to feel the Effects of Malice from those who bear an intimate and mortal Hatred and Aversion to God and Goodness, and all good Men, *viz.* evil Men influenced by evil Spirits. And therefore we must be armed with invincible Patience to stand all their Attacks, to bear all the Load upon us, and yet keep our Ground unmoved. But if we are frightened from our Duty by the Terrors of Men, the Will of God is made known to us in vain. Such are represented in the Parable by the Seed which *fell upon stony Places where it had not much Earth*, which was presently scorched and withered by the Heat of the Sun, because it had neither Depth of Earth,
Root

Root nor Moisture^a. *They that received the Seed into stony Places, the same are they that bear the Word and anon with Joy receive it, yet have not Root in themselves.* [These are weak and unstable Minds, that are easily affected either one Way or another, that are soon pleased and as soon displeased with the same Thing, that soon take Fire and as soon cool again. Their good Dispositions are but superficial not deep and solid, they are not founded upon humble Patience, and a firm Resolution to adhere to the Will of God, be what it will, cost what it will.] These *endure but for a while*, just as long as they find no Trouble and Difficulty in Religion, and following God: *But when Tribulation or Persecution ariseth because of the Word, they are immediately offended^b and fall away^c.*

Thirdly, Patience is necessary in order to stay for the proper Times and Seasons, and Opportunities for practising what we have heard; and also to bear with our own Defects and Imperfections in the Practice of it, till such time as by long Use and the Encrease of Grace it *brings forth Fruit to Perfection*. Many are of such an hasty, over-forward, and impatient Spirit, that they precipitate every Thing and thereby spoil it, and so render their good Designs abortive. *There is a Time for every Thing*, and proper Seasons and Opportunities for exercising every Grace and Virtue. A

^a Matt. xiii. 5, 6. Luke viii. 6.

^b Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

^c Luke viii. 13.

Man that should go from Church to Church to exercise his Devotion, when he ought to be at Home, looking after, and providing for his Family; or He, that, in order to perform the Duty of Brotherly Admonition, and thereby do an Act of Charity, should rebuke a Man when he is either drunk with Passion, or strong Drink, would certainly spoil these good Works by mistiming them. Like the Children of *Israel*^a, who disobeyed God's Will, under Presence of obeying it, by rashly doing a Thing he had commanded, at a Time he had forbidden, *Deut.* i. 42, 43.

Lastly, We have Need to have Patience with our selves, to bear with our many and great Defects and Imperfections in the Practice of our Duty and the Will of God. This is a Charity we owe to our selves, as well as to the rest of Mankind. It is therefore a great Fault proceeding from Pride and Impatience, to fret and vex our selves, to be disquieted and discouraged at our Infirmities and Imperfections, at our Failing and Deficiency in some Circumstances which should accompany a good Action to make it perfect. The true Way is to have Patience with our Infirmities, without indulging them; and to be sorry for, and humbled by our Defects, without being dejected and discouraged at them; and charitably to bear with what we cannot by our utmost Endeavours help, till the Grace of God, in Time, conquer them for us. 'Tis with the Works of Grace, as with the Works of Nature. They are not finished

^aGoing of their own Head to conquer the Land of *Canaan*.

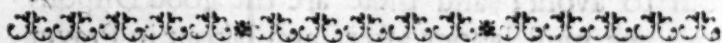
at once, and in an Instant; they require a proper Time, and are brought to Perfection by slow and insensible Degrees. A Child must have Time to become a Man. The Seed sown must have Time to come to Maturity. And it would be altogether as unreasonable to think to arrive at Perfection on a sudden, as to expect that a Child should grow a Man in a Day, or that the Seed sown one Day should be fit to reap the next.

These are the Indispositions we are to endeavour to avoid; and these are the good Dispositions we must labour after, and labour in Prayer to God for, if we would be benefitted by hearing the Word. But if we do not thus, we shall find all the good Sermons we have heard will rise up in Judgment against us: We shall find *that which was ordained unto Life, made Death unto us*^a: That which was appointed as a Means of Salvation, we shall find turn to our greater Condemnation: We shall find our selves fatally *deceived, if we have been Hearers only, not Doers of the Word*^b. To know our Lord's Will, and not to do it, will be an Aggravation of our Crime and Punishment^c. But if we would be happy, we must not be *forgetful Hearers, but Doers of the Word*, and then we *shall be blessed in our Deed*^d. Which God grant we may all be, through the Merits of Jesus Christ, and by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. To whom, with the Father, be, &c.

^aRom. vii. 10. ^bJames i. 22. ^cLuke xii. 47. ^dJames i. 25.



SERMON XIII.



ISAIAH XXVI. 8, 9.

*In the Way of thy Judgments, O Lord,
have we waited for thee; the De-
sire of our Soul is to thy Name, and
to the Remembrance of thee.*

*With my Soul have I desired thee in
the Night; yea, with my Spirit
within me will I seek thee early:
For, when thy Judgments are in the
Earth, the Inhabitants of the World
will learn Righteousness.*



THE Prophet, having in the 5th and 6th Verses of this Chapter threatned Sinners with God's Judgments, does here, in the 8th and 9th Verses, speak in the Person of those upon whom the Judgments
of

of God had made the proper Impressions, and had had a good Effect; acknowledging the sincere Conversion of their Hearts and Souls to God, and declaring, as from their own Experience, that the proper Remedy for the Evil of Sin, is the Evil of Punishment, saying, In the Way of thy Judgments, &c. q. d. ' O Lord, ' *when thou smotest us, we turned unto thee;* ' *when we were in Trouble, we visited thee,* ' *and poured out a Prayer, when thy chastening* ' *was upon us.* We considered that *thy Mercy* ' *is over all thy Works,* that thy Love is above ' all thy Attributes, that *in the Midst of Judg-* ' *ment thou remembrest Mercy:* Nay, that thy ' Judgments are the Effects of thy Mercy: ' *Therefore, in the Way of thy Judgments, O* ' *Lord, have we applied our selves to thee,* ' and *waited* patiently for thy Mercy; either to ' deliver us out of them, or to support us under them, and to strengthen and enable us to ' bear them with perfect Patience and Resignation to thy adorable Will. For, it is ' not our selves that we seek, but thee; not ' our Ease, but thy Glory: *The Desire of our* ' *Soul is to thy Name.* The supreme Desire ' of our Spirits, and that which we have most ' at Heart is, that thou mayest be glorified in ' us by our Love, Duty, and Obedience to ' thee; and as the proper Means to this End, ' *the Desire of our Soul is to the Remem-* ' *brance of thee,* to live in a constant Sense of ' thy Presence every where, especially within ' us; to behave our selves always as in thy ' Sight, and to have our Thoughts, as much

‘ as possible, continually employed upon thee.
 ‘ This is our earnest Desire and constant En-
 ‘ deavour, Night and Day, early and late, *with*
 ‘ *my Soul have I desired thee in the Night;*
 ‘ *yea, with my Spirit will I seek thee early,*
 ‘ there, where thou delightest to be sought, and
 ‘ to be found, where thou *delightest to dwell,*
 ‘ that is, *within me,* in the *Temple* of my Heart.
 ‘ This blessed Change is owing to the Im-
 ‘ pressions made upon my Soul by thy Holy
 ‘ Spirit, by the Means of thy Judgments, which,
 ‘ extinguishing my Appetite for, and giving me
 ‘ a Disgust to those Things which used to rob
 ‘ thee of my Heart, and in which I used to
 ‘ offend thee to please my self, put me upon
 ‘ turning to thee, and seeking thy Favour, and
 ‘ the Light of thy Countenance, in whom *alone*
 ‘ *true Joy is to be found;* and *in whose Plea-*
 ‘ *sure* (or in pleasing whom) *is Life:* And the
 ‘ same good Effect thy Judgments have had
 ‘ upon me, the same they are naturally apt to
 ‘ have upon others: *For, when thy Judgments*
 ‘ *are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the*
 ‘ *World will learn Righteousness.*

From this Paraphrase upon these Words, we may perceive they contain these two remarkable Things in them.

I. A general Observation of the good Effect of God’s Judgments upon Mankind. When, &c.

II. A particular Example of the good Effect they had upon those whom the Prophet personates, and in whose Name he speaks in the Text.

III. Both

III. Both these, I intend, God willing, to make the Subject of my following Discourse, which I shall conclude with an Application suitable to this solemn Occasion.

I. *First*, then, I shall endeavour to confirm the Truth of the general Observation in the Text, of the good Effects of God's Judgments upon Mankind, declared in these Words, *When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.*

[Now the good Effect of God's Judgments, which I chiefly intend to insist upon in this Discourse, is the Conversion of Sinners.]

In order to this I shall endeavour to prove,
1. That the End and Design of God, in his Judgments, is to do Men good. 2. That God's Judgments have a natural Tendency and Efficacy to promote that End. 3. Shew, by Examples, that they have actually attained that End, and produced that Effect.

1. I am to endeavour to prove, that the End and Design of God, in his Judgments, is to do good to Men; to make the bad good, and the good better; to convert the Sinner, and to purify and sanctify, in order to glorify the Righteous; to purge out their Imperfections, and to exercise and try, thereby to strengthen and encrease, their Virtues and Graces, in order to encrease their Glory and Happiness to all Eternity.

God has told us, in his Holy Word, that he *is Love*, and that *Fury is not in him*. Now it is Demonstration, That from Love nothing
but

but Love can flow. God is Love it self, and all he thinks, and says, designs, and does, is Love, and only Love. His Banner, his Motto and Device is LOVE, *Cant. ii. 4.* 'Tis under this Banner, then, that he fights, whenever he seems to make War against us. His Wounds are the Wounds of a Friend, the Wounds of Love. If he pursue us, it is in order to take and captivate our wandering roving Hearts; if he *smite us*, it is that we should *turn to him*; if he wound us, it is that we should apply our selves to him for Cure and Consolation; if he embitters all worldly Things to us, it is that he alone may be sweet and pleasant to us: If he deprive us of the greatest worldly Objects of our Love, it is that He, the God of Love, the jealous God, may alone possess our Hearts without a Rival: If he send the Sword upon a Nation, and make their Land the Seat of War, it is to shew them, and make them sensible of the Evil of their rebelling and fighting against the Lord of Hosts, by their Sins and Iniquities, and to move them to make their Peace with him: If he smite the Land with Barrenness, and bring a Famine upon it, and break the Staff of their Bread, it is to shew them, and make them sensible of the infinitely greater Evil of the Barrenness of their Souls in all Virtues and good Works, and of the infinitely greater Calamity of a Famine of spiritual Food, that is, God's Grace, and to raise their spiritual Appetite, and make them hunger and thirst after God and his Righteousness, that they may be filled: If he send a Pestilence, or
Plague,

Plague, among a People, it is to let them see, and make them sensible of the infinitely more dismal and desperate Condition of a Soul infected with Sin, that so they may loath and abhor themselves, and repent in Dust and Ashes, and apply themselves to him *who forgiveth all our Sins, and healeth all our Diseases*, and may be *converted to him, that he may heal them*. If he wound the Body, it is that the Soul may be healed; If he *give up the Flesh to Destruction, it is that the Spirit may be saved*; If he *kill*, it is with a Design to *make alive*; if he inflicts temporal Death upon us, it is designed by him as a Means to make us Partakers of eternal Life.

Thus we are assured in Scripture, that God *woundeth and healeth*; that he *killeth and maketh alive*: That he *doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men*: That he *chastens us not for his Pleasure, but for our Profit, that we may be Partakers of his Holiness*, in order to be made Partakers of his Happiness; and that *it is of very Faithfulness that he causes us to be troubled*; and that *happy is he whom the Lord correcteth*.

2. The Judgments of God have a natural Tendency and Efficacy to convert and reform Sinners, and to perfect the Righteous.

The Two predominant and ruling Passions in human Nature, are the Fear of Evil, and the Desire of Happiness; and nothing is more proper to work upon these, and direct them to and

* Deut. xxxii. 39.

fix them upon their right Object than the Judgments of God.

Nothing is more proper to work upon our Fears, than God's Judgments: for tho' they do certainly proceed from Love, Goodness and Mercy in God, yet are they, and, indeed, ought to be terrible to Men. Even holy *David* himself says, *My Flesh trembleth for Fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy Judgments*; for as the Opinion we have of the Kindness and good Intention of a skilful Surgeon, that is going to cut off an Arm, or a Leg, does not at all contribute to lessen the Terror, or the Pain of the Operation, but only to make us willing to put our selves into his Hands, and trust him with our Body: So the firm Persuasion, that the Judgments of God are designed in Mercy, does not make them less terrible and painful to Nature, but only moves us to turn to him, instead of flying from him; *to humble our selves under his mighty Hand*, and, with perfect Resignation, to commit our selves to him who, we are sure, has Power, Wisdom, and Goodness enough to make bodily Diseases turn to the Health of the Soul, and temporal Evils to contribute to our eternal Happiness.

The Expressions, with which God has been pleased to clothe his Threatnings of Judgments against Sinners, were designed to rouse and alarm their Fears, and to convey Terror into their Spirits; such as, that God will *pour upon them his Anger, Wrath, Indignation, Vengeance, Fury*. And if the Words are terrible, how terrible must the Things be? If the Threatnings

nings are dreadful, how dreadful must be the Judgments?

When the Sinner, then, feels the Load of God's Wrath lying heavy upon him, and his Hand pressing him sore; nothing is more natural than for the Sense of present Evils to awaken his Fears of future Misery; and to make him reason with himself after this manner: If the Punishment of Sin in this Life be so Severe, how dreadful must it be in the next? If temporal Pains are so heavy and hard to bear, how insupportable must eternal Torments be? This will naturally put him upon *fearing him, who* after he hath killed the Body, *hath Power to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell*. And this will put him upon fearing any more to offend him whom he thus fears; and put him upon endeavouring to reconcile himself to God, by hearty and sincere Repentance for his past Offences, and by his hearty Endeavours to serve and please him for the future, that so he may escape the Judgment of God, and the Wrath to come.

And as to that ruling Faculty of our Soul, the Desire of Happiness, which is the Spring and Source of all our Actions, nothing is more proper to direct and set it right, and to fix it upon the right Object, than the Judgments of God. For the Judgments of God, either taking away, and depriving us of all the Objects we used to set our Heart upon, and place our Delight and Happiness in, or taking away our Gust and Relish for them, and, by perpetual Uneasiness and Pain, giving us rather a Disgust to all Things here below; and the Desire of Happiness never

never being idle in the Soul, we naturally and necessarily, after one Object of our Happiness is gone, seek for another; and finding by Experience, that nothing in this transitory World can give us solid and lasting Happiness, it naturally puts upon looking up to him, *in whose Presence there is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right Hand, there are Pleasures for evermore.*

3. And that thus it has been in Fact, and that the Judgments of God have actually had this good Effect, I come now, in the Third Place, to prove by Examples.

The Scripture is full of Instances every where to this Purpose. The *Ninevites* were so terrified with the Threatning of the Prophet *Jonah*, that they repented and escaped the Judgment^a. The same did *Ahab* upon the Threatning of *Elijah*, and had the same Success^b. How often does the holy Psalmist tell us of the Children of *Israel*, That *they cried unto the Lord in their Trouble, and he saved them out of their Distress*^c. That *when he slew them, they sought him, and turned them, and enquired early after God*^d, and that *they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer*: And that *he was so merciful, that he forgave their Iniquities, and destroyed them not*^e. Nay, the Royal Prophet, speaking of himself, says^f, *Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word.*

^a *Jonah* iii. 10.

^b *1 Kings* xxi. 29.

^c *Psal.* cvii. 6, 13,

19, 28.

^d *Psal.* lxxviii. 34, 35.

^e *V.* 38

^f *Psal.* cxix.

67, 71.

And again, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes.*

But speaking of the Examples of the good Effect of God's Judgments puts me in Mind of, and naturally leads me to consider the

Second Head of my Discourse, viz. The particular Example of the good Effect the Judgments of God had upon those whom the Prophet personates, and in whose Name he speaks in the Text, when he says, *In the Way of thy Judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee.* The desire of our Soul is to thy Name, and to the Remembrance of thee. With my Soul have I desired thee in the Night; yea, with my Spirit within me will I seek thee early.

In which Expressions we have the Description and Characters of the most sincere, excellent, and acceptable Conversion of the Soul to God. Which are,

1. To turn the whole Bent and Force of our Desire wholly to God alone.

2. To turn the Attention and Application of our Soul inward, to God dwelling within us, by endeavouring to live in a constant Sense of his Presence, and in a continual seeking him and lifting up our Hearts to him in Prayer; as I shall have Occasion to shew more at large by and by, in the Application I am now going to make.

III. Come we therefore in the last Place, to make an Application suitable to the solemn Occasion of this Day's Humiliation.

And here I shall

1. Enquire what Reason we have to apprehend that the Scourge is prepared for us, and to fear that

that the Judgment of God that is now gone forth in the Earth, and so terribly afflicts a neighbouring Nation, is designed also for us. And,

2. Shew, from the Observation and Example in the Text, the proper Way either to prevent it, or be prepared for it.

1. And *First*, If we enquire what Reason we have to apprehend that the Scourge is prepared for us, we shall find but too just Ground to fear that God's Hand is lifted up against us.

' For, Are we not verily a sinful Nation,
' abounding and laden with Iniquity of all Sorts?
' And is not the Source of all, an utter Forgetfulness and Contempt of God, and of the
' great Means he has used for our Recovery?
' What a monstrous Height is Infidelity come to?
' How is the Lord of Life every where condemn'd,
' and his Holy Name and Spirit publicly blasphemed? Are not those Works and Principles
' of Darkness done and published with Impunity? Are not then the Sins become National?
' And since the blessed Mediator of Mercy and Love is rejected, and the Spirit so obstinately
' grieved, must not Justice at last take Place?
' When Men *deny the Lord that bought them*,
' must not *swift Destruction be brought upon them?*

Are not the Practices of the Age as corrupt as the Principles? Does not Sin rage with more Fury and Obstinacy than the present Pestilence, and slay more Souls than the Plague does Bodies? Has not Profaneness and Vice seized and infected all Orders and Degrees of Men among us, *high and*

and low, rich and poor? Do not the rich despise the poor, and the poor envy and malign the rich? Do not the rich spend their Riches upon their Lusts, and the poor spend, in the Works of the Devil, what was given them for God's Sake? Do not the Men of this Age seem to think themselves not only made of, but for this Earth? Did ever any People more literally fulfil the Psalmist's Description of the ungodly, *viz. That they care not for God, neither is God in all their Thoughts?* For, Are not our Hearts and Souls, our Thoughts and Designs, our Words and Works, all applied to, and employed about this World, and the Things of this World? Do we not love, and set our Affections upon, and sacrifice all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls and Bodies to the Idols of Honour, Riches and Pleasures? Was ever the Education of Children more wretchedly neglected, who, instead of being *brought up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*, are brought up without any manner of Sense of God, or Religion upon their Spirits, and being suffered to have their own Wills, and to follow the Inclinations of their corrupt Nature, seem trained up on purpose for the Devil? So that the next Generation is like to be worse than even the present. But why should I mention any more? For the Time would fail me, if I should speak of the Uncleanneſs and Lewdneſs, the Whoredom and Adultery, the Gluttony and Drunkenneſs, the Cheats and Frauds in buying and ſelling, the prophane Cursing and Swearing, the Murder and Blood-ſhed, that are publickly committed in the Face of the Sun,

S

besides

besides the Abominations that are committed in Secret. *Shall not I visit for these Things, and shall not my Soul be avenged of such a Nation as this?* What can we expect, but that his Jealousy should smother against us, and consume those Idols which have so shamefully and unjustly robbed him of our Hearts? Is it not just in God, to deprive us of those good Things we have made so ill an Use of, and to take away those Lives we have spent in dishonouring and offending him? Nay, if nothing else will do, must not God send us a Judgment even out of Mercy, and cut us off on purpose to hinder the Encrease of our Sins and Guilt, thereby to hinder the Encrease of our Punishment to all Eternity?

Since, therefore, we have so great Reason to apprehend that the Scourge is prepared for us, it will be highly necessary for me, in the

Second Place, to shew, and for us all to take the proper Way either to prevent it, or be prepared for it, recommended to us in the Observation and Example in the Text.

If the End and Design of God's Judgments be, that the Inhabitants of the World should learn Righteousness, should turn unto the Lord, should truly repent for their Sins, and amend their Lives, should cease to do Evil, and learn to do well, then it is certain, the most effectual, nay, the infallible Method to prevent them is, That all, and every one of us, turn to God, and truly repent us of our Sins.

Let us humble and prostrate our selves, and lie low before him. Let us acknowledge the
Justice

Justice and Righteousness of his Judgments in all that can come upon us: That we have deserved all, and infinitely more than all that is possible to be inflicted on us in this World. Nay, let us not only acknowledge the Justice, but the Mercy of his Judgments, who chooses to chastise us only with Whips, when he might in Justice chastise us with Scorpions; and instead of giving us Warning and Time to repent, by his temporal Judgments might justly, suddenly tumble us headlong into the bottomless Pit of eternal Torments. Let us with Shame, and Confusion, and Sorrow, acknowledge our manifold Sins and Wickedness, and cry mightily unto him for Mercy and Pardon, and Grace and Strength to amend our Lives for the future, through the Merits and Passion, the Blood and Death of his beloved Son, our adorable Redeemer. Then let us give our selves up wholly to God, and, after the excellent Example in the Text, endeavour with the whole Power and Vigour of our Spirits,

1. To turn the whole Bent and Force of our Desire wholly to God alone.

2. To turn the Attention and Application of our Soul inward, to God dwelling within us, by endeavouring to live in a constant Sense of his Presence, and in a continual seeking of him, by lifting up our Hearts to him in Prayer.

That we may be able to say with Sincerity, and from the very Bottom of our Heart, with the same Truth, in the same Sense and Spirit, and with the same Dispositions actually in our Souls, as the holy Persons in the Text. *In the*

Way of thy Judgments have we waited for thee, O Lord; the Desire of our Soul is to thy Name, and the Remembrance of thee. With my Soul have I desired thee in the Night; yea, with my Spirit, early will I seek thee within me.

1. We should turn the whole Bent and Force of our Desire wholly to God alone.

The Desire of our Soul is to thy Name. *i. e.* to thy Glory; for so Name in Scripture frequently signifies.

As nothing is more necessary to true and sincere Conversion, so nothing is more righteous and just, than to repair our past Faults by the Practice of the contrary Virtues. As therefore our Desire was formerly bent upon our own Will, our own Pleasure, and our own Glory, so now it ought to be wholly bent towards the Will, the Pleasure, the Glory of God. It ought to be the supreme Desire of our Spirits, that God should be glorified in us, and by us, by our Love, Duty, and Obedience to his divine Majesty. We ought continually to offer up our selves, Souls, Bodies and Spirits, all that we are and have, all that we can do and suffer, without Exception or Reserve, as a Sacrifice to his adorable Will, Pleasure and Glory, in Time, and to Eternity. The Glory of God is the very End of our Being, and therefore we ought to pursue it every Moment of our Lives. Wherever we are, whatever we do, it ought to be always uppermost in our Thoughts, and most at Heart, and the Rule of all our Actions. In whatever we design, in whatever we desire, in what-

whatever we do, in all our Thoughts, Words and Works, we ought always to seek his Honour and Glory, and study to please him, and do his Will, according to the Apostle's Precept. *^a Whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* But,

2. We ought, according to the Example of the holy Persons in the Text, to turn the Attention and Application of our Soul inward, to God dwelling within us, and endeavouring to live in a constant Sense of his Presence, and in a continual seeking of him, by lifting up our Hearts to him in Prayer; for so say these holy Penitents, The Desire of our Soul is to the Remembrance of thee. *With my Soul have I desired thee in the Night; yea, with my Spirit will I seek thee early within me.*

The living in a constant Sense of God's Presence, and in continual Prayer to him, are the great Instruments of holy living; the easiest, the pleasantest, the shortest, and surest Way to Heaven: The most effectual Means to know and do our Duty, to root out all Vice, and to implant all Manner of Virtue in the Soul. For which Reason it is that infinite Wisdom has so frequently inculcated it, so strongly urged and pressed it upon us in Holy Scripture.

We should therefore *set God always before our Eyes*, and where-ever we go, *walk with him, and in his Presence*, and whatever we do, do it as in his Sight. We should consider our Souls, (as they really are, and are said to be

^a 1 Cor. x. 31.

in Scripture) as the Temple and Habitation of God, and God as dwelling and residing in them; and we should continually be turning our Thoughts inwards, and praying to, worshipping and adoring, and offering up the Sacrifice of our selves, and all our Actions, to God, in the Temple of our Hearts. We should *seek the Lord and his Strength, and seek his Face evermore.* At all Times, and in all Places, where-ever thou art, whatever thou art about, *Pray.* Art thou in Trouble and Affliction, *Pray.* Art thou in Prosperity, *Pray.* Art thou in *Company, Pray.* Art thou in *Solitude, Pray.* Art thou about Business, *Pray.* Art thou about any innocent Diversion, *Pray.* Art thou tempted, *Pray.* Art thou freed from the Temptation, still *Pray.* Wouldst thou conquer any Passion, *Pray.* Wouldst thou extinguish any disorderly Affection, *Pray.* Wouldst thou root out any Vice, *Pray.* Wouldst thou acquire any Virtue, *Pray.* Wouldst thou be secured from the Wiles and Power of the evil Spirit, *Pray.* Wouldst thou obtain the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, *Pray.* *Pray always. Pray without ceasing. In every thing, by Prayer and Supplication, let your Requests be made known unto God,* as we are directed, by God, in his Holy Word.

Nay, if the greatest habitual Sinners would but take this Method, and turn themselves inwardly to God within them, and would with Sorrow and Shame, humbly, ardently, and con-

tinually pray to him, they would infallibly be, in a little Time, effectually converted.

This Method then, if we would all take it, would be the most effectual Means to learn that Righteousness which the Judgments of God are sent abroad into the Earth to teach Men: And it would be the most effectual Method, either to prevent them, or to be prepared for them.

This would be the Way to prevent God's Judgments, even tho' he had sent a Messenger on purpose to threaten us with them. *Jonah* was sent by God to the *Ninevites*, on purpose to denounce Destruction to their City: But when God saw their Works, that they turned from their evil Way, and God repented of the Evil that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not. *Jonah* iii. 10.

But notwithstanding, tho' our Repentance should not be so general and national, as to prevent the Judgment from falling upon us, yet I will venture to affirm, that they who have followed the Example in the Text, which I have been discoursing on, have the best Grounds for hoping to escape it. What *S. Peter* says concerning God's delivering righteous *Lot* out of the astonishing Destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, is of great Consolation to all true Servants of God, in all publick Judgments and Calamities, viz. That the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of Temptations, and to reserve the unjust to the Day of Judgment, to be punished, 2 *Pet.* ii. 9. And more especially what holy *David* says in *Psal.* xci. of those that continually endeavour to retire within

their Hearts, into the secret Place of God's Presence^a. *He that dwelleth in the secret Place of the most High, shall abide under the Shadow of the Almighty. Surely he shall deliver thee from the noisome Pestilence^b. Thou shalt not be afraid for the Terror by Night, nor for the Arrow that flieth by Day^c; nor for the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness, nor for the Destruction that wasteth at Noon-day. A Thousand shall fall at thy Side, and Ten Thousand at thy right Hand, but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine Eyes shalt thou behold, and see the Reward of the wicked.* Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my Refuge, even the most High, thy Habitation, there shall no Evil befall thee, neither shall any Plague come nigh thy Dwelling.

But after all, If God, for Reasons best known to himself, should suffer the Judgment to seize any of his faithful Servants, yet they that follow the holy Example in the Text, and live in a constant Sense of his Presence, and in continual Prayer, and desire nothing but his Glory, are best prepared to wait for the Lord, in the Way of his Judgments.

They that thus ^d*watch and pray*, are in the very Disposition that the great Judge prescribes to all his Servants, to be prepared for the great Day of Judgment.

And they that have resigned and given themselves wholly up to God, and do truly and sincerely, and from the Bottom of their Hearts

^aVer. 1. ^bVer. 3. ^cVer. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. ^dMark xiii.
33.

and Souls, desire nothing but the Glory of God, and that his Will may be done in all Things, will *possess their Souls in Patience, in the midst of all Afflictions*, and with the blessed Apostle, it will be equal to them, if ^a *Christ be magnified in them, whether it be by Life, or by Death.* And ^b *in suffering according to the Will of God, they will commit the keeping of their Souls unto him in well doing, as into the Hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Redeemer*, being fully assured, ^c *That our light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* Which God, &c.

^a Phil. i. 20.

^b 1 Pet. iv. 19.

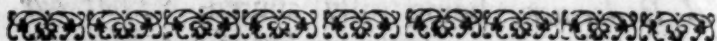
^c 2 Cor. iv. 17.



S E R.



SERMON XIV.



H E B. ii. 10.

*It became him, for whom are all Things,
and by whom are all Things, in
bringing many Sons unto Glory, to
make the Captain of their Salvation
perfect through Sufferings.*



IT is one of the hardest Things in the World, to persuade Men of what they are unwilling to believe, and what they have no Mind should be true. Self-Love and Self-Interest will never fail, in furnishing specious and plausible Objections against the plainest Evidence; they will raise such a Dust, and cast such a Mist before our Understandings, that an unacceptable Truth, in the clearest Light, shall appear dark and uncertain, or be misapprehended, or taken for a down-right Falsity. And I make no Manner of Doubt, but that if mathe-
thema-

thematical Truths did directly attack Mens Corruption, and contradict their Lusts and Passions, as moral and religious Truths do, they would quarrel with Demonstration, and not yield, even to Self-Evidence. Demonstration would no longer beget Assent, nor Self-Evidence Conviction. They would either not think of them at all, or contradict them if they did, or reject, with their Wills, what they could not confute with their Understanding.

I am sure it is thus they do, and always did serve the great Truths of Religion, altho' they have the Advantage of all others, not more in Worth and Weight, than in Strength and Brightness; for they shine with a double Lustre, and are accompanied with a divine Brightness, besides their own native Light: We are assured of them, not only by the Light of Nature and of right Reason, but from the Light of God and Divine Revelation; yet these are the daily Subjects of Neglect, Mistake, Contradiction and Rejection.

But among all the Truths of Religion, none meets with greater Opposition from Flesh and Blood, because none more contrary to Flesh and Blood, than the Doctrine of Suffering. Salvation it self, proposed upon these Terms, is but an unwelcome Offer, and how desirous soever Men are of the End, they cannot be persuaded to embrace the Means. Tho' God, only wise, out of the infinite Treasures of his Wisdom, made Choice of the Way of the Cross, both for the Head and the Body, both for the Redeemer and the redeemed, as the most effectual
Means

Means to recover lost Man, and to bring him to Salvation and Glory, and has set this Truth in the clearest Light, and given the highest Evidence and Assurance of it, both in most express Declarations of Scripture, and in the Life and Death of his most adorable Son, the Saviour of the World; yet because it bears hard upon their Corruption, the very Wisdom of God shall pass for Foolishness with Men, and the Brightness of the divine Light shall be Obscurity, and Truth it self shall not meet with Belief. The Doctrine of Christ crucified was to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the *Greeks* Foolishness: The preaching up a suffering Religion, a Way to Paradise, strewed with Thorns, a suffering Master, and suffering Disciples, was, and is, so shocking to the Pride and Self-Love of humane Nature, that it seldom fails of putting its corrupt and deceitful Reason upon raising of plausible Objections against admitting of, and entering into such disagreeable Measures. But tho' to the Eyes of carnal Reason, and worldly Wisdom, this may appear an ill-contrived and ineffectual Method, yet they who see Things as they are in Truth, and in the divine Light, will, with the holy Apostle *S. Paul*, see and acknowledge, that it is *Christ the Power of God*, and the Wisdom of God, the wisest and most powerful Means of Salvation: They will see, and confess, that the Foolishness of God is wiser than Men; and that the Weakness of God is stronger than Men; and that whatever Men may think of it, it was a Design every Way becoming and worthy of God;

God; for he says expressly, *It became him for whom are all Things, and by whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings.* i. e. it became God, the Creator of all Things, in the Redemption of lost Mankind, to bring the Captain and Leader by the same Way, by which his Soldiers and Followers were to be brought to Glory, that is, by Sufferings.

So that the Text contains these Two Propositions.

1. That it was every Way worthy of God, it became his Wisdom, his Justice, his Goodness, his Purity, and Holiness, to bring sinful Man to Salvation, by Sufferings.

2. That it was every Way becoming the divine Nature, to bring the Captain of their Salvation, their Head, their Leader, their Pattern, to the same End, by the same Means.

1. That it was every Way worthy of God, it became his Wisdom, his Justice, his Goodness, his Purity and Holiness, to bring sinful Man to Salvation by Sufferings.

In speaking to this first Point, I shall shew,

1. The Matter of Fact, That God has actually made Choice of the Way of Sufferings, to bring sinful Man to Salvation.

2. That it was every Way worthy and becoming God so to do.

1. Then I am to shew that God made Choice of the Way of Sufferings, to bring sinful Man to Salvation.

Man,

Man, we know, was created in a State of perfect Happiness, as well as Innocence; and had he continued in the latter, must have continued in the former: For, Suffering is nothing but the natural and necessary Effect and Consequence of Sin: Which being a very useful and important Truth in itself, and no improper Introduction to what may be said on this Subject, I shall not think it Labour lost, to consider it more at large, in this present Discourse.

The blessed God hath taught us, in his Holy Word, that he made all Things for his Glory. The Glory of God is the Manifestation of his Nature and Attributes, of his Beauties, Excellencies and Perfections. All Creatures, therefore, were in their proper Ranks and Orders; some in a higher, some in a lower Degree; some in a more strong and lively, others in a more faint and languid Manner, Images and Representations of the Perfections of the Creator.

Now as in the Nature of God, not only every Attribute, separately considered, is admirable and glorious, but also all the divine Properties do subsist together in a most beautiful, glorious and happy Accord and Agreement, without the least interfering, or clashing Opposition, or Contradiction, between one Attribute and another: So in the Works of God, (as they came out of the Hands of their Maker) the Nature and Attributes of God were justly and lively represented, not only by the Goodness and Perfection of every Creature considered distinctly, and in its own Nature; but also by the perfect good Agreement, the admirable, and blessed

Har.

Harmony of the whole System of Creatures, with Relation to one another; so as that in the original Constitution of Things, there was no more Opposition, or Contrariety, in the Works, than in the Nature of God: *There was nothing that could hurt, or destroy, in all God's holy Mountain^a*; nor is it possible it should have been otherwise, unless it were possible for God to deny himself, to bear false Witness of his Nature, and to represent himself outwardly what he is not inwardly, unless infinite Beauty could be the Cause of Deformity, Union, and Harmony of Opposition and Discord, and Happiness of Misery: This God cannot be, nor do, because he cannot lie, nor deny himself. No, the Works of the perfect must be perfect, *the Work of God is a perfect Work^b*. The Creatures were not only the Works and Effects, but the Images of Goodness, and the Maker of them all, the God of Knowledge, and of Truth, upon a Review of all his Works found and pronounced them good: Good, both separately and conjunctly, good in themselves, and good with Relation to all other Things.

Now while Man continued in the Order of God, and in Subordination to, and Union with the divine Will, he, and the whole Creation, subordinate to him, continued in the Happiness, as well as Glory and Perfection of their original Constitution: But no sooner did he dissolve this divine and blessed Union and Harmony, by dissolving the Tye of Love and Friendship,

^a Isa. xi. 9.

^b Deut. xxxii. 4.

which

which united and linked together the Creator and the Creation, by opposing and setting up himself against God, and resisting and contradicting the divine Will; but immediately he, and the whole Creation subject to him, by a natural and necessary Consequence, as well as by a just permissive Judgment, fell into Disorder and Confusion, Corruption and Misery, and that not by any positive Act of Infliction of any Evil, in any Kind, by God; but negatively and privatively, that is, by God's not hindering the natural Effects and Consequences of Things, and by his subtracting and withdrawing those blessed Influences, Operations and Communications of the Creator, from whence alone does flow, and upon which depends the Beauty, Order, Well-being, and Happiness of the Creatures; and which, after the Sin of Man, could no longer be communicated, but to the Prejudice of God's Honour, Glory, and Justice. Otherwise, properly and strictly speaking, and in the Truth of Things, God cannot be the efficient Cause of any kind of Evil, no more of natural, than of moral Evil: For, *Modus operandi sequitur modum essendi*, as is the Nature and Essence of any Being, such are its Actions and Operations: If God act, he must act as God; and as God is a Being, who is naturally and essentially good and happy, his Actions must of Necessity partake of his Nature, and tend directly to make those upon whom they are exerted and employed, according to their Capacities, good and happy too. And when God punishes Men, it is not by acting,

acting, but by not acting; by taking no Knowledge, or Care of them, by leaving them to themselves, and to their Sins, and to the natural, miserable, and accursed Consequences of them, and by withholding those his blessed and gracious Influxes, and Communications of himself, in which the Life and Happiness of our Spirits does consist, and without which we must, of Necessity, be infinitely and intolerably, inexpressibly, and inconceivably miserable: Which he also withdraws and suspends, for no other Reason, but because we wilfully and obstinately reject them, and will not admit, or receive them. Even Damnation itself, which is the greatest natural Evil, is, in Scripture, described by a Departing and Separation from God. *Wo to them, when I depart from them^a. All that forsake thee, or are far from thee, shall perish^b. Depart from me ye cursed^c.* Certainly, the Privation of the supreme and infinite Good, must, of Necessity, be the supreme and infinite Evil. So that, in Reality, God neither punishes, hurts, or damns, any Man, but Men punish, hurt, and damn themselves, falling into all Evil, both of Soul and Body, both of Pain and Loss, by voluntarily rejecting and depriving themselves of all good. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self, but in me is thy Help^d.* If Men are destroyed, their Destruction is of themselves, in God there is nothing but Salvation and Life; he has nothing, in his Nature, but Good-

^a Hosea ix. 12.

^b Psal. lxxiii. 27.

^c Matth. xxv. 41.

^d Hosea xiii. 9.

ness to give, and if he does not give it, it is because Men will not receive it. *Ye will not come to me*, says our blessed Saviour, *that ye might have Life*. And, as the wise Man speaks admirably, *Wisd. i. 13. God made not Death, nor hath he any Pleasure in the Destruction of any living; for he created all Things, that they might be*, (or continue for ever in Being) *and the Generations of the World, at first, were healthful; nor was there any Poison of Death in them; for Righteousness is immortal, but wicked Men, (there is the positive Cause of all Evil, the evil Will of Man) with their Words and Works brought it upon them.* So Chap. ii. 23. *God created Man immortal, and made him an Image of his own Eternity; but by the Envy of the Devil, came Death into the World.*

In this State of Misery and Confusion consequent upon the Fall of Man, it was free to God, either to pass by fallen Man, as he had done by the fallen Angels; or else to take him in Hand again, and put him into a State and Capacity of recovering and being restored to his former and original State of Purity, Glory and Happiness. If the former of these Cases had happened; that is, if God had left fallen Man to himself, and to the natural and necessary Consequences of his Sin, in a little Time the World would, by the prodigious Encrease of Wickedness and Misery, have become a corporal Hell, and Men incarnate Devils. But it pleased the divine Goodness to take the other Course, and moved by the infinite Dignity and Merits of the Mediator and Intercessor of Mankind,

kind, the adorable Son of God, to look upon the wretched and accursed Race of Men in their most miserable and desperate Estate; and to find out for them, and to propose to them Means and Methods, Terms and Conditions of Reconciliation and Recovery. To this Purpose the divine Providence chose out such Circumstances for Man, during the Time of his Probation and Trial, that is, this temporal Life, as were most effectual for bringing about this great End; and finding that a State of Glory and Happiness could not keep him from falling, chose out a State of Suffering, to facilitate and secure his Recovery: For, this is the express Declaration of the divine Will and Appointment, even at the very same Time that God let *Adam* know he had taken him to Favour. *Gen. iii. 17, 18, 19. Cursed is the Ground for thy Sake; in Sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the Days of thy Life; Thorns also and Thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and in the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread, till thou return unto the Ground: For, out of it wast thou taken, for Dust thou art, and to Dust shalt thou return.* In which Sentence is contained the whole Scheme of Suffering in its Latitude, both outwardly and inwardly, both with Regard to the Soul, as well as to the Body. The outward and corporal Sufferings are plainly expressed in the obvious and literal Sense of the Words, viz. That Man should with great Pain and Trouble support a Life which should end with greater; that his whole Life should be a Scene

of Evils, which should conclude with the greatest of all.

The inward Sufferings of the Mind are also contained in the hidden and spiritual Sense of these Words, to this Effect, That the Ground, which is the Soul of Man, which, being at first impregnated with the divine Blessing, and sown with the Seed of eternal Life, had *Adam* continued in his original Purity, would have brought forth the Fruit of Righteousness, as naturally as Water flows from a Fountain, and Light and Heat from the Sun: That this Ground, I say, the Soul of Man, being by Sin become accursed and corrupted, would now naturally produce nothing but noxious and poisonous Weeds, Sin and Wickedness. If any thing truly good, if any holy and virtuous Dispositions, Habits and Actions, were produced there, it must not only be by the singular Blessing of Heaven, but great Labour, Toil and Trouble to Man, by reason of the Corruption, Barrenness, and evil Disposition of the Soil; and by reason of the perpetual Vigilance and Subtilty of the Enemy the Devil, to root out, or choke the good Seed, and sow it with Tares. But besides all this; as the Fruits of the Earth, so hardly got, serve only to nourish and sustain a Body of Corruption, which must be destroyed by Separation, and by being resolved into its first Principles, by Death, before it can be restored to its primitive State of Life and Glory; so in like Manner, even the Virtues produced in the Soul with so much Difficulty, are apt to nourish and keep alive that Self-Esteem and Self-Love which
are

are the intimate and fundamental Corruption of our Souls: (Men being apt, really, tho' secretly, to value themselves upon, and trust in their good Works, more than they suspect, or discern, or will believe) Which spiritual Corruption must also be destroyed by a spiritual Death, *the Death unto Sin*, by the Mortification, Crucifixion, and total Destruction of all Propriety or Selfishness, of all Self-Complacency, Self-Love, and Self-Will, till the Soul is reduced to a perfect Unity, I had almost said Identity, with the divine Will, and has not one contrary Motion, of its own, left. Without which spiritual Death, the Soul cannot attain unto the spiritual Resurrection unto Newness of Life, nor be renewed after the Image of him that created it in Righteousness and true Holiness. This spiritual Death, the Destroying of the Body of Sin, is the Gate thro' which all must pass, that would enter into eternal Life; which being so narrow, it cannot be passed without great Difficulty, as our Lord has told us. The spiritual Death being most certainly to be brought about and finished with Sufferings, by so much more exquisitely painful than those of the corporal, by how much the Soul is a Principle of infinitely greater and quicker Sensibility, than the Body.

This then was, and is the Choice, Determination and Appointment of God, after the Fall of Man, to bring his Sons unto Glory, by Sufferings; which, were it needful, I might confirm, both by innumerable Passages of Holy Scripture, such as, *That we must, thro' many Tribulations,*

tions, enter into the Kingdom of God. That all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution. That we must deny our selves, forsake all that we have, and take up our Cross daily: As also by the Examples of all the Saints and Servants of God, from the Beginning of the World to this Day, not one excepted, whose Degrees of Sanctity were in Proportion to the Measure of their Sufferings; it being a general Rule, without Exception, The greater the Saint, the greater the Sufferings. Thus the Holy One himself, the King of Saints, our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, did not more exceed the whole Race of Men in Sanctity, than in Sorrow. *Lam. i. 12. They are the Marks of Christ Jesus, and the Seals of the Kingdom of Heaven.*





SERMON XV.

H E B. ii. 10.

*It became him, for whom are all Things,
and by whom are all Things, in
bringing many Sons unto Glory, to
make the Captain of their Salvation
perfect through Sufferings.*



THE Sense of this Passage will appear very plain, from this short Paraphrase.

‘ It became God, the Creator of
‘ all Things, and Father of Men, in
‘ the Redemption of lost Mankind, his Sons,
‘ to bring the Captain and Leader, by the same
‘ Way, by which his Soldiers and Followers
‘ were to be brought to Glory; that is, by
‘ Sufferings.

From whence you will perceive, that the Text contains Two Propositions.

- I. That it was every Way worthy of God; it became his Wisdom, his Justice, his Goodness, his Purity and Holiness, to bring sinful Man to Salvation, by Sufferings.
- II. That it was every Way becoming the divine Nature, to bring the Captain of their Salvation, their Head, their Leader, their Pattern, to the same End, by the same Means.

In speaking to the first of these, I proposed to do these Three Things.

1. To shew the Matter of Fact, That God had actually made Choice of the Way of Sufferings, to bring sinful Man to Salvation.
2. To account for this, and shew that it was every Way worthy and becoming God so to do. And,
3. To draw some useful Inferences from this Doctrine, and so conclude this Point.

The *First* of these I have already spoken to in a former Discourse, and am now upon the *Second*, viz. To shew that it was every Way worthy of God, that it became his Wisdom, his Justice, his Goodness, his Purity and Holiness, to bring sinful Man to Salvation, thro' Sufferings.

1. It became the Wisdom of God. Nothing is so great a Demonstration of infinite Wisdom, as the bringing Good out of Evil, making the highest Dishonour turn to the Advancement of his Glory; and the natural and necessary Consequences of Sin tend to its Destruction and Misery to be the Instrument of eternal Happiness; making the Effects of our Fall, the Means of our Recovery, as Diseases are instrumental to

our

our Health, and Death it self an Introduction to Life.

All these excellent and admirable Ends are brought about by God's choosing and ordaining Sufferings, as the Means of Salvation.

Nothing, certainly, is more glorious for God, than for a Soul chearfully, freely and willingly, to embrace and undergo, for God's Sake, in a Spirit of Humility and Penitence, those Sufferings which are the necessary Consequences, as as well as the just Rewards of our Sins. For which Reason, Repentance is in Scripture called, *Giving Glory to God*. Now our Repentance is such a Sorrow, for having offended the most gracious and glorious Being, as makes the Penitent willing and desirous to do, and suffer, whatever is necessary to repair God's Honour, and retrieve his Love.

And as the Sufferings, which are the Effects of Sin, tend to the Glory of God, so do they to the Benefit of Men, not only as they correct, but as they do naturally tend to instruct and amend them.

For Sufferings, being the natural and necessary Effects of Sin, are a sensible Demonstration of its abominable and accursed Nature: By them Men are effectually, because experimentally taught how odious the Cause is, from what they feel of its Effects. If the Effects be so evil, how evil must the Cause be? From hence Men learn to hate and abhor it, to shun and avoid it in their Actions, and to endeavour, as far as they are able, to root out all Tendency and Disposition towards it in their Souls. Thus the Wisdom of
God

God has so contrived the Matter, as to make the Viper itself a Cure for its own Venom, and has made Use of the natural Effect of Sin, to destroy its Cause, by purging and purifying our Souls from their Corruption, by the bitter Cup of Sufferings and Affliction.

Again, The Wisdom of God is most evidently seen, in appointing Suffering, as the Way to Salvation, as it is a proper Means to that End.

The Way by which Man fell was, by setting his Love and Affection upon the Creatures, and setting up, and following his own Will, in Opposition and Contradiction to the Will of God. Now it is plain, that the Way to his Recovery and Re-establishment, must be the direct Contrary to that by which he fell. If he fell by taking away his Love and Affection off from his Creator, and placing them upon the Creatures, he must be restored by taking off all Love and Affection from the Creatures, and placing them wholly upon the Creator. If he was lost by the Rebellion and Opposition of his Will, against the Will of God, there is no other Way for his Recovery, but a most absolute and entire Submission, and a most perfect Union of the Will of Man, to and with the Will of God, in all Things. Without this, there is no Possibility of Salvation, or Happiness, for Man.

Now nothing is more conducive to these Ends than a State of Sufferings. Nothing is so apt to take off our Affections from the Creatures, as the Trouble and Uneasiness they give us. Nothing so proper to take off, and wean our Hearts from

from the World, as the Experience of its being a miserable World. Nothing so proper to put us upon seeking for Happiness out of this World, as Suffering and Misery in it.

And as Sufferings are proper for taking off our Love from the World; so they are fitted, those of the Mind especially, for curing of our Self-Love. For when once the Hand of God hath touched us, and we come to see our selves by a Ray of divine Light, and to discover the incredible Malignity and Deformity of our Souls, our Sins and Corruptions, and our Consciences are touched to the Quick with the Sight and Sense of them, then instead of loving, we shall loath and abhor our selves.

Now Love, being the most active Principle in our Souls, can never be at Rest, without an Object to fix itself upon, and unite itself to; and if we have taken it off from the false Objects, it will naturally and necessarily turn itself towards, and run into the true one. As Rivers, if the Dams and Obstacles which hinder their Course, and make them spread themselves over the neighbouring Grounds, were removed, would immediately recollect themselves in their proper Channel, and naturally run directly to the Sea; so our Souls, when once disengaged from the Love of our selves, and the rest of the Creatures, which are the Impediments that hinder them from going strait to God, will naturally and necessarily turn themselves to, seek and fix themselves upon, and adhere to their proper Object, even God, only, wholly, essentially and supremely good.

Besides,

Besides, as Sufferings conduce to our Salvation, in helping us forward towards the Love of God, by removing the only Impediments of it out of our Souls; so also they tend to the same End, by being instrumental to the reducing our rebellious and opposite Will to an entire Resignation and Submission to, Conformity and Union with the Will of God.

Self-Will can never be mortified and overcome in us, but by contradicting it, and nothing is so great a Mortification and Contradiction to it, as Suffering. There is nothing which the Self-Will of our corrupted Nature so eagerly and greedily desires, as Ease, Pleasure, Abundance, Honour and Esteem, nothing, consequently, is so rude and shocking to it as Suffering, Pain, Poverty, Reproach and Contempt. Now as this Self-Will is nourished and kept alive in us, by giving what it desires, so by denying it, and humbly and resignedly accepting at God's Hands, and patiently undergoing and enduring those Afflictions and Sufferings which the Wisdom of divine Providence dispenses variously to every one, according to their several Needs and Necessities, it is mortified, crucified, and extinguished, and like a Body from which you perpetually withdraw its Food and Nourishment, it languishes and dies.

This puts me in Mind of Two other Particulars, wherein the Wisdom of God is most admirably apparent, in ordering and disposing the Evils and Afflictions of the World; namely, with Relation to the Whole, and to each Particular.

There

There is, in the present State of Things, a Mixture of Good and Evil discernable in every thing. The Water that is cooling and refreshing, is also crude and phlegmatick: The Fire that warms and cherishes us, will also burn and consume us: The very Food that nourishes us, breeds Humours that destroy us; and so in all other Things. Had there been no Sin, there would have been nothing but Good; and had not God taken Man into Favour again, after his Sin, there would have been nothing but Evil in the World: But God, moved by the irresistible Intercession of his adorable Son, taking Man in Hand again, and graciously affording him a new Time, and different State of Trial and Probation, did, with such divine and inconceivable Wisdom, so retrieve Nature out of the Confusion it was fallen into by Sin; did, on the one Hand, so repress the Evil and the Curse, and on the other, so invigorate and inspirit Nature with new Blessings, and did so admirably and exactly order and temper the Good and Evil, and balance the one against the other in all Things, as that they are most justly fitted to answer all the Ends and Necessities of Man, spiritual and temporal, in this his probationary State, to support him in Life here, and to lead him naturally, if he will be led to eternal Happiness hereafter.

The Evils of Nature are not so great and violent as to overwhelm, amaze and confound him, so to leave him neither Time nor Capacity for working out his Salvation; nor is the Good so exquisitely and excessively affecting, as to force and overbear his Reason and Judgment,

ment, so to take up his Heart, and all the Faculties of his Soul, and perpetually distract him from God and his Duty: But there is just so much Good left as is necessary to support Man in his Time of Pilgrimage and Place of Banishment, to keep his Mind calmed and undisturbed, for continually attending upon his God, and his Duty; and just so much Evil remains, as is necessary to take off his Love and Affection from the Creature, and to chastise and correct him for, to cure him of, and purge him from his Sins.

Lastly, As the Constitution of Mens Souls is as different as the Temperament of their Bodies, and particular Persons are subject to particular Sins and Distempers of the Mind, as well as to particular Diseases of Body. The Wisdom of God is most admirable, in applying the proper Remedies, in choosing such particular Kinds of Afflictions, either inward or outward, either of Mind or Body, in so adjusting and tempering their Degrees, Duration and Intervals, as are most proper, and proportioned to the particular Circumstances and Dispositions, Needs and Necessities of our Spirits.

And tho', by reason of our present Darkness, we are not able clearly to discover the divine Wisdom in all this, (altho' to pious and attentive Minds, it is not altogether hid neither) yet when the Veil comes to be taken off our Eyes, and we are fit to be let into the secret, and are so happy as to be admitted into the heavenly *Canaan*. The Beauty of God's Conduct in leading us into, and safely guiding us thro'

thro' the several Hardships and Dangers of the great and terrible Wilderness of this World, will shine in full Lustre, and will make one of the most surprizing and delightful Prospects of Eternity: We shall then clearly *discern the Wisdom of God in the Afflictions of Men*, and know the Worth and Excellence of Sufferings, and value them, as the brightest Jewels in the Crown of Glory.

Is it not just, that Men should *reap* as they have *sown*? and that they should taste, at least, of the cursed Fruit of that Root of Bitterness which they have planted? Is it not just, that God should suffer them to feel some Misery, that have forsaken eternal Happiness itself?

Again, It became the *Justice* of God, to bring sinful Man to Salvation, through Sufferings.

Nothing is more agreeable to the common Notions Mankind have of Justice, than that a Debt ought to be discharged, and the criminal and guilty punished.

Now, if a Debtor owes more than all he is worth in the World, and the Creditor is willing to take only what he can spare, and leave him Liberty and a Competency, is not this highly just and reasonable? Nay, is it not highly generous and charitable? If a Man has forfeited his Life and Fortune to his Prince, and the Prince is willing to change the Sentence of Death into a slight temporal Punishment; and the Forfeiture of his whole Estate, into a small pecuniary Mulct, is it not the highest Justice, that the Criminal should suffer this Punishment, and pay this Fine? And is it not the highest Clemency and

and Mercy in the Prince, to accept them? Is it not most highly just, that he should pay one Mite, that owes Ten Thousand Talents? Can any thing be more equitable, than that we should suffer, willingly, light, temporary Punishments, if God, in infinite Mercy, thro' the Merits of our adorable Saviour, forgives us infinite and eternal Torments? But this is so evident, it needs no further Proof.

But what is more wonderful, is, That the bringing sinful Man to Salvation, thro' a State of Suffering, is not more a Design of *Justice* than of *Mercy*, and every Way becoming God's *infinite Goodness*.

Perhaps it might seem, at first Sight, to a careless Considerer, to be more agreeable to Goodness and Mercy, to have forgiven, at once, all the Punishment due to Sin, and to have taken away, at first, all the evil Effects of Sin, both temporal and eternal. But this is a false View, and taken thro' the Glass of our corrupt and carnal Affections. But if we consider the Matter without Partiality and Prejudice, we shall find it otherwise.

That, undoubtedly, is most agreeable to the greatest Goodness, which is designed for our greatest Good. Now our greatest Good being eternal Life and Happiness, it is evident that the Means that does most effectually promote that End, is most becoming the greatest Goodness. It is certain, in Experience and Fact, that Man did fall, when the State God had placed him in, for his Trial and Probation, was a State of outward Glory and Happiness. Now if Man

was

was overcome, and betrayed into Sin, by the alluring Charms of the Creatures, then, when he was in the Strength and Integrity of his rational and spiritual Powers: How is it possible to be thought, he should be able to stand and maintain, keep his Ground, and resist the same Strength of Temptations, now, when he is so much weakened by original Sin and Corruption? It is but too evident, that the greatest Part of Mankind, by far, are ensnared and captivated by the Pleasure they find in the Creatures, even in this miserable and corrupted and languid State they are in at present. And surely, if all Things had been restored to the primitive and original Charms and Beauty they were at first created in, not one of the sinful Sons of the Sinner *Adam* could have resisted the Strength of their Influence.

It is a common Observation, That there are many more brought to a true Sense of God, and of themselves, of Virtue and Religion, by Adversity than by Prosperity. And, no Doubt, there are many that have been raised from a Dunghil into *Abraham's* Bosom, with *Lazarus*, who, had they been in *Dives's* Circumstances, would, probably, have had *Dives's* Fate; many that have been advanced from a Prison to a Throne, in the Kingdom of Heaven, who, had they lived in a Palace, would, perhaps, have been cast down into the Dungeons of the bottomless Pit.

So that, all Things considered, it was infinite Goodness and Love that moved God to permit so many Evils and Miseries in the World, and to make the State we were to pass thro', as our

Way to Heaven; a State of Sufferings and Sorrow; since nothing, as was observed before, can be more proper to take off our Love and Affections from the Creatures, than the Trouble and Uneasiness we find in them; nothing more proper to make us think, in good Earnest, of another World, than the Miseries we suffer in this: Nothing more apt to move us to have Recourse to the Fountain of Happiness and Life, than the Experience of Misery and Death. Does not a violent Drought make us long for the refreshing Streams? Does not Sickness naturally make us seek for Health, and Pain put us upon seeking Ease? So natural is it for the Miseries of this World, to put us upon seeking the Happiness of the next: So natural is it for those who have felt the Smart and Anguish of the Wounds of Sin, to apply themselves to the great Physician of Souls: So natural is it for those who have been made sensible of the Terrors and Horrors of Sin and Guilt, to fly to a Saviour and Redeemer: So natural is it for those who find the Emptiness of all Creatures, and that they all are but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, to turn their Thoughts, and fix their Hearts and Affections there where true Joys are to be found.

A Surgeon, that cuts and slashes, that hacks and hews a Limb that is in Danger of Mortification, seems very barbarous and cruel, but is, notwithstanding, really compassionate and kind, and prevents much greater Evils than he causes. A Father, that corrects his Son, does not thereby shew his Unkindness, but his Love.

And

And it was of infinite Love and Goodness, that God left so many Evils and Miseries in this World, that they might prevent us from running into the Torments of the next. They are like the Remnant of the *Philistines* to the *Israelites*, they are left to be as Goats in our Sides, and Thorns in our Eyes, to keep us, by their Sharpness, continually at a Distance from the World, and make us continually draw near to God. For this Purpose God has made all Things about us troublesome and uneasy to us, that we might seek our Pleasure and Happiness in him alone.

Lastly, It became the *Purity* and *Holiness* of God, to bring sinful Man to Happiness, thro' Misery.

It is most certain, That *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*: That *nothing defiled and impure can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. That Light can have no Communion with Darkness, nor Purity itself be united with any thing impure: Therefore those Means to Salvation are best becoming the Purity and Holiness of God to ordain, which are most effectual to purify our corrupted and polluted Nature.

Now after the Merits of the Blood of Christ, the Son of God, and the inward Operation of the Holy Spirit of God, nothing contributes so much to the purifying our Souls, as a State of Suffering. Not only as it contributes to abate our Apperite to, and Relish of, and to take off our Affection and Love from the World, and the Things of the World; but also as it conduces, most effectually, *to crucify the Old Man in us*,

and utterly to abolish the very Body of Sin; to mortify and destroy that which is the most *intimate Corruption* of our Spirits, and the very *Root and Source* of all Sin, viz. *Self-Love*, and *Self-Will*.

Nothing, as I observed before, is more proper to break our Self-Will, than perpetual Opposition and Contradiction. And nothing is more contrary to Self-Will, than Suffering; because there is nothing our carnal Part abhors and avoids like Pain and Trouble; and nothing it desires and pursues so eagerly, as Ease and Pleasure.

Again, Nothing is more proper to cure our Self-Love, Self Esteem, Vanity and Pride, than a State of Suffering; especially the inward Sufferings of the Mind: For when Men once come to be touched with a due Sight and Sense of the horrid and odious Nature of Sin, and penetrated with a Ray of divine Light; see the monstrous Ugliness and Deformity of a Soul polluted with Guilt, and at the same Time view the infinite Difference and Distance between such a Soul, and the infinitely pure and holy God; then all their imaginary Beauties and Perfections vanish, and leave them monstrous and ugly in their own Eyes: Then their *Comeliness is turned into Corruption*, their Light into Darkness, and their Love of themselves into Abhorrence.

Whereas, were the Soul perpetually to have its own Will, and enjoy an uninterrupted State of Pleasure and Prosperity, it would never submit its Will to the Will of God; were it never to see the disagreeable Spectacle of its own
Ugliness

Ugliness and Deformity, it would for ever be enamoured of, and blindly dote upon itself.

Thus in Grace, as well as Nature, we find that Bitters are purifying, and that there is no Way more effectual to purge away the old Leaven of inbred Corruption and indwelling Sin, than the spiritual bitter Draught, the Cup of Affliction.

The most effectual Way, to mortify and kill any thing, is perpetually to refuse it whatever it likes, and to give it whatever it has an Aversion to, and at last to withdraw all Manner of Food and Nourishment from it.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew you how it became the divine Wisdom and Justice, and Goodness, and Purity, and Holiness, and that it was every Way worthy of God, to bring sinful Man to Salvation, by Suffering.

I shall only draw an Inference or Two from what has been said, and so conclude.

I. First, *If it be ordained and appointed by God, that all must make their Way to Salvation thro' Suffering: Then no Man ought to be surprized at it, when it happens to be his Lot.*

Every Christian should reckon upon it, and expect it, and should arm and prepare himself for it. And our blessed Lord expressly cautions us about it, saying, *Whosoever does not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my Disciple:* And then goes on to tell us, this is what we must reckon upon; these are the very Terms we must receive Christianity upon. For

^a Luke xiv. 27, 28, 29, 30.

which of you intending to build a Tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the Cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? lest haply after he hath laid the Foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This Man began to build, and was not able to finish, &c. So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple. S. Peter also warns us not to be surprized at the Sufferings we meet with, saying, ^a Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery Trial, (that is, of Sufferings and Afflictions) which is to try you, as tho' some strange Thing happened unto you.

A Man that is travelling to any Place is not surprized to find himself in the Way that leads to his Journey's End. Nor is it any Wonder, that he that is travelling towards Heaven finds himself in a *strait Way*. If Gold were an intelligent Creature, it would not think it strange to be thrown into a Crucible, to be melted by the Fire, and so purged and purified from its Dross, and thereby become fit for making a Vessel for a Prince's Use. There's no other Way of doing it. A Soldier is not surprized at the Fatigues of his March, at the Coldness and Hardness of his Lodging in the Camp, at the Difficulties of an Engagement. He knows all this before-hand, that it is the proper Life of a Soldier, the Way his Captain and Leader has gone before him, and the only Way that

^a 1 Pet. iv. 12.

leads to Victory. Thus a Christian must not wonder, *that he passes thro' many Tribulations before he enters into the Kingdom of God*, that he enters in at a *strait Gate*, and walks in a *narrow Way*, if he bends his Course towards *eternal Life*.

2. Secondly, *If God has appointed and ordained Sufferings as Means and Instruments of our Purification and Salvation; then we ought to look upon them, not as evil, but good; not as the Effects of his Anger, but of his Love; not as Curses, but as Blessings.*

And we ought to be so far from complaining, repining, and murmuring at them, that we ought to thank God for them, and rejoyce in them. 'Tis a Pleasure to a Traveller to be certain that he is in the right Way, notwithstanding the Roughness and Ruggedness of the Road. The Prospect of Health makes us cheerfully submit to the Nauseousness of Physick, and think our selves obliged to the friendly Hand that administers it. A Man is glad to part with one Limb, to save his whole Body, and thanks the kind Hand that performs the painful Operation. A loving and obedient Child kisses the Hand that corrects him. Thus when we are in Tribulation, we should rejoyce, because we are in the narrow Way that leads to the Kingdom of God. When the great Physician of Souls dispenses Afflictions to us, we should cheerfully accept the Cup from his Hands, as an effectual Medicine to cure our spiritual Sickness. When our heavenly Father chastises us, we should kiss the Rod, and adore the Hand that corrects us.

For, thus we are taught by God, in his holy Word, to count it all Joy when we fall into divers Temptations and Trials^a, and to rejoyce in Afflictions; because by them we are made Partakers of Christ's Sufferings. That when his Glory shall be revealed, we may be glad also with exceeding Joy^b. For, if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him^c. For, Sufferings are the Tokens of God's Fatherly Love and Care, the Features and Lineaments of God's only begotten, well-beloved Son, the Marks of Jesus Christ, and the Seals of the Kingdom of Heaven.

3. *If Sufferings be ordained by God, as Means of our Purification, we ought, as much as in us lies, to contribute to, and cooperate with God's Designs and Intentions.* We ought, in a State of Affliction, to endeavour to take off our Affections, and wean our Hearts from this miserable World; to submit and conform our Wills to the Will of God. And when he opens our Eyes, and shews us to our selves, in a true Light, and in our proper Colours, we should renounce all Self-Love, abhor our selves, and repent in Dust and Ashes.

4. And Lastly, *If the Design of bringing sinful Man to Salvation, by Sufferings, is every Way so becoming and worthy of God,* we ought, in all our Sufferings and Afflictions, whether outward or inward, to admire and adore his Wisdom, to reverence his Justice, to acknowledge and love his Goodness, and infinitely esteem his Purity and Holiness. We ought

^a James i. 2.^b 1 Pet. iv. 13.^c 2 Tim. ii. 12.

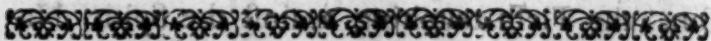
humbly and thankfully to accept them in Penitence for our Sins; meekly, quietly, patiently, resignedly and cheerfully bear them, not only as Instruments of our Good, but of Glory to our God.

This most certainly is our bounden Duty. These Things are so clear and evident in Speculation, that we cannot but own them, and assent to the Truth, Justice and Reasonableness of them. Yet, notwithstanding, when the Time comes that they should be put in Practice, we then feel our corrupt Passions opposing our Reason, the Flesh revolting against the Spirit, Nature resisting Grace, and our Self-Will rebelling against the Will of God. Therefore since the Christian Way and Manner of bearing Afflictions is a Work contrary to, and indeed above the Strength of our corrupted Nature, we ought, above all Things, to call in a supernatural, divine Power to our Aid and Assistance. We ought humbly, constantly, and ardently implore the Grace of God's Holy Spirit, to give to us, and work in us a meek and patient Resignation, a cheerful and ready Compliance, and a most perfect and entire Submission and Conformity of our Wills, to and with the Will of God in all Things. To whom be all Honour, Glory, Adoration, Love, Duty and Obedience, to all Eternity. *Amen.*

S E R-



SERMON XVI.



L U K E X V. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise Joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over Ninety and nine just Persons, which need no Repentance:

TH E S E are some of those gracious Words which proceeded out of that divine Mouth which spake as never Man spake. *Verba quovis melle dulciora^a! Words sweeter than Honey, and the Honey-comb^b, rejoycing the Heart, and ^cconverting the Soul!* Which, like a most precious and soveraign Balm dropping ^dfrom the hea-

^a Plak. xix. 10.
Deut. xxxii. 2.

^b V. 8.

^c V. 7.

^d Cant. iv. 11.

venly Lips of the blessed Physician of Souls, eased and refreshed the wounded Hearts of those poor ^a Sinners which applied themselves to him for Relief.

The Evangelist, in the First Chapter ^b, tells us, that the Publicans and Sinners drew near to our blessed Lord, to hear him; touched, it is probable, by the divine Power of his Preaching, with a lively Sense of, and Sorrow for their Sins, they came to *him*, to forward and compleat their Conversion and Repentance, by whom it was begun; and to seek Help from that heavenly Tongue, by which their Hearts at first were wounded.

The merciful and compassionate Redeemer of Mankind receives them graciously, and treats them with that Tenderness and Sweetness with which his Heart, all Love, abounded and overflowed.

Upon this, as the Evangelist goes on to tell us, *the Scribes and Pharisees murmured* ^c. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were a Generation of Hypocrites, who, under the highest Pretences to Sanctity, were really the most abominable Sinners. They did all their Works to be *seen* ^d, and *justified* of Men; but had no Regard to God who *searcheth the Heart, and trieth the Spirit*; and therefore tho' they were *highly esteemed amongst Men*, they were *an Abomination in the Sight of God* ^e. *Like whited Sepulchers, which appear beautiful outwards, but*

^a Luke xv. 1. ^b Luke xv. 1. ^c V. 2. ^d Matth. xxiii. 5.
^e Luke xvi. 15.

*are within were full of nothing but dead Mens^a Bones, Rottenness, Corruption and Uncleannefs. So they appeared righteous unto Men, but within were full of all Iniquity^b. They abstained from gross and outward Vices, and were scrupulously, and even superstitiously, exact and punctual in the Observance of the outward and carnal Ordinances of the Law; but their Hearts were full of most damnable spiritual Sins; and yet they valued themselves only as righteous, and despised all others^c. They thought it a Crime to come near, or converse with Sinners, who perhaps fell thro' human Infirmary while they themselves were possessed by, and wholly given up to Diabolical Vices, as Pride, Envy, Malice and Hypocrisy. These Men swoln with Pride, fretted, and were ready to burst with Envy, to see one, that passed for so great a Prophet, overlook and neglect Persons of their great and uncommon Sanctity; while he freely conversed with those whom they despised, and thought it a Defilement of themselves, but to touch^d. And not being able any longer to contain, they subtilly vented their Malice under a specious Pretence of Concern for the interest of Religion, saying, *This Man receiveth Sinners, and eateth with them.* q. d. ' It is a Dishonour to God, and a Scandal and Injury to Religion for this Man, who pretends to be so holy and great a Prophet, to be so familiar with Sinners. Indeed they should not have had the Assurance to have come so near him,*

^a V. 12. ^b Matth. xxiii. 27, 28. ^c Luke xviii. 9. ^d Isai. lxxv. 5.

‘ or if they had, it was his Business either to
 ‘ have avoided them, or repulsed them with Dis-
 ‘ dain, at least to have used them with Seve-
 ‘ rity: But his treating so familiarly gives Of-
 ‘ fence to the righteous, Encouragement to the
 ‘ wicked, brings a great Blemish upon his Re-
 ‘ putation for Sanctity, and is a great Objection
 ‘ against his Pretences to the prophetick Cha-
 ‘ racter. To this malicious Censure and Re-
 flection, the mild and meek Saviour of Man-
 kind answers, and according to the divine and
 irresistible Wisdom by which he spake, justifies
 himself, confutes and silences his Adversaries by
 the Parable of the lost Sheep. *Ver. 4, 5, 6.*
 By which he intimates, that he being *the Shep-
 herd^a of Israel, the ^bgood, the ^cchief Shep-
 herd of Souls, who came to seek and save that
 which was lost^d; and even to give his Life for
 the Sheep: To quarrel with him for seeking
 and endeavouring to bring back, by Repent-
 ance, Sinners, who, by following the Devices
 and Desires of their own corrupt Hearts, had
erred and strayed from the Ways of God, was
 the same Thing as to find Fault with a Shep-
 herd for seeking a lost Sheep, or (to use ano-
 ther admirable Image of our Lord’s, upon a like
 Occasion) to quarrel with a Physician for vi-
 siting his Patients^e: And to find Fault with Sin-
 ners for coming to him, was as unreasonable as
 to blame a wandering Sheep, every Moment ex-
 posed to the devouring Jaws of ravening Wolves,
 for returning to its Shepherd^f; or to censure*

^a Psal. lxxx. 1.

^b John x. 14.

^c 1 Pet. ii. 25. and v. 4.

^d Luke xix. 10.

^e Matth. ix. 12.

^f V. 14.

the

the sick for applying themselves to a Physician. That he was in his proper Business, when by conversing with, he was labouring in the Conversion of Sinners; and that nothing could be more becoming and suitable to a Prophet and a Messenger of God, than to be doing God's Work, by gaining Souls to God.

But, besides this, he gives them to understand, that in conversing with those poor Sinners, he was doing a Work much more for the Honour of God, and the Interest of Religion, than if he had been conversing with them. For, besides that, there was more Hopes of doing some Good, and working a Cure upon those who owned themselves sick, and felt their Disease, than upon those who thought themselves so well as to need no Physician; he assures them, that there accrued more Glory to God from the Conversion of one great and enormous Sinner, than from Ninety nine such righteous Persons as they were, who were righteous only in their own Conceits, and presumed they needed no Repentance; nay, and indeed more, than from the same Number of Persons of common and ordinary Goodness, who in some Sense really need no Repentance, *i. e.* don't stand in Need of so total a Change of Heart and Life, as notorious Sinners do.

So that Sinners were so far from being in the Wrong, in coming to him, that the greater Sinners they were, the greater Motives and Encouragements had they to Repentance; because the greater Glory would they bring to God^a,

^aV. 15.

and the greater Joy would they cause in Heaven; and the more desirous they were to repent, the greater Reason had they to come to him, who came to call Sinners to Repentance. And that upon the Whole, it was most unjust and unreasonable to find Fault with them for coming to him, or with him for receiving them, who, by their Repentance, would occasion more Joy in Heaven than Ninety nine just Persons, who need no Repentance.

From this View of the Occasion of these Words, the Design of them evidently appears; which was not only for a Vindication of our Lord's Conduct from the malicious Reflections of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, but also to be

1. A great Motive and Encouragement for Sinners to repent.

2. As great a Motive and Encouragement to Sinners to draw near to our Lord, as the proper Means to that End. This Design is so excellent, that it is impossible, in discoursing upon this Passage, to do any thing better than to pursue it; to which Purpose I shall endeavour, God willing,

I. To clear up and lay open to you the Truth of the Assertion in the Text, *viz.* That *there is Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over Ninety nine just Persons, who need no Repentance.*

II. To apply this Passage to our blessed Lord's Design, and to make Use of it.

1. For a Motive and Encouragement for Sinners to repent.

2. As

2. As a Motive and Encouragement to Sinners to draw near to our blessed Lord, as the proper Means to that End.

I. *First*, I am to clear up and lay open to you the Truth of the Assertion in the Text, *viz.* That there, &c.

I have already hinted, that by Repentance, in this Place, our blessed Lord means a total and thorough Change of Heart and Life from Sin to God; and that by the just Persons which need no Repentance, he means, (not such as never sinned at all, for there are none such, but) Persons of common and ordinary Virtue, who have gone on in the common Track with great Evenness, and perhaps as great Indolence and Indifference, and who not having run into any wicked Course, nor, it may be, wilfully guilty of any great and notorious Crimes, have no Need of such an extraordinary Change as great and notorious Sinners have. By Joy in Heaven, is meant the Pleasure and Delight which God himself and his holy Angels take in the Conversion of a Sinner. So that the Meaning of the Text, in other Words, is,

That God, and the holy Angels of God, do rejoyce more over the Conversion of one great and notorious Sinner, than over a great Number of Persons of common Virtue.

To lay open this Matter more fully and clearly, we will consider,

1. How Joy in God may be conceived to admit of Degrees, and be capable of more and less.

2. What

2. What may be supposed to be the Grounds and Reasons of this greater Degree of Joy, ascribed here, in the Text, to God and the holy Angels, upon the Conversion of a great Sinner.

1. *First*, We will consider how Joy in God may be conceived to admit of Degrees, and to be capable of more and less.

We may conceive and distinguish Two Sorts of Joy in God.

The one primary and essential, flowing from within, which is an infinitely lively Sentiment and Sense of infinite Pleasure and Delight, arising from the Contemplation, Possession and Enjoyment of himself in himself, and of the infinite Treasures of his infinite Beauties, Excellencies and Perfections. And this Joy in God is, as God himself is, infinitely perfect and complete, invariable and immutable, never greater or less, but is always uniform and the same, as God is always the same; it is equal to all that God is, and is indeed God himself, being no other than the Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the adorable and ever-blessed Trinity, whose distinguishing Character is Joy and Love.

The other Joy in God is secondary and accessory, arising from something without him; and is a most lively Sense and Perception of Pleasure and Delight, resulting from his viewing, relishing and enjoying his infinite Perfections, his Power, Wisdom and Goodness expressed in, and impressed upon, and, as it were, reflected back to him from his Works, his Creatures and Images. Now these, being various and different in Kinds and Degrees of Perfection, must occa-

tion a Variety and Difference in the Degrees of Pleasure resulting from them; some of them having fewer and less, and others more and greater Characters of Divinity stamped upon them. Some having fainter and weaker, others more strong and lively Lineaments and Features of the divine Image impressed upon them: It is plain, that the Joy and Delight God takes in any Creature must be proportionably greater, or less, according as that Creature is a less, or more perfect Image and Resemblance of himself. This is incontestable: For no Man, in his Senses, would question whether God takes more Pleasure in an Angel than in a Grain of Sand. For, tho' they are both Creatures, and as such, both Images of the Creator, yet the one has infinitely more and stronger Characters of Divinity impressed upon it, than the other; the one is a nobler and better Likeness than the other, and consequently more pleasing to the blessed Author of them.

Now, of all this lower Creation, Man being the most exact and perfect Copy of the divine Original, being the lively and living Image of the living God, God takes more Pleasure and Satisfaction in him than in all the rest of the Creation. Accordingly, in Scripture, tho' God is said, in General, to rejoyce in his Works, (*Psal. civ. 31.*) yet of Man he says, καὶ ἐξορχν, by Way of Eminency and Excellency, that *his Delights are with the Children of Men.* Prov. viii. 31.

Besides, there are not only different Degrees of Perfection in different Kinds and Species of God's

God's Creatures, but there are also different Degrees of Perfection in the several Individuals of the same Species: And it is with human Nature as it is with the angelical; in in which there are different Degrees of Perfection: Some Angels being of an higher, others of a lower Order, in the celestial Hierarchy. Accordingly the Pleasure and Delight God takes in the several Orders of Men and Angels must be less or more, according as their Perfections are less or more.

Now, tho' this Kind of Joy in God admits of Degrees, as we have seen, yet this no Ways touches or affects his essential Joy; the Augmentation of the first does not at all encrease the latter; nor the Diminution, or even total Privation of the one, in the least lessen or abate the other: For, tho' God were deprived of Joy, by the defacing of his Image, in all his Works material and spiritual, yet would he remain essentially, eternally, immutably and infinitely joyful and happy in himself. Upon this, as the Evangelist goes on to tell us, *The Scribes and Pharisees murmured, saying, This Man receiveth Sinners, and eateth with them.* The Sense of which Reflection, considering the Hypocrisy, Envy, and Pride, which composed their Character, we may justly thus represent. If a Man had made a most exquisite and exact Image of himself in Wax, or other Materials, tho' he would take great Pleasure and Satisfaction in the excellent Contrivance and Art which he had shewn in that Piece of Workmanship, yet if this Image were defaced, or destroyed, it would

cause him no Pain, he might be solidly and substantially happy notwithstanding.

Thus much may suffice to give us a Notion in General of Joy in God, which admits of Degrees, and which may be more or less, without any Derogation from the Perfection of the divine Nature. Come we now,

2. *Secondly*, To consider what may be supposed to be the Grounds and Reasons of this greater Degree of Joy ascribed here, in the Text, to God, upon the Conversion of a Sinner.

The Joy and Delight which God takes in spiritual Natures, over and above that which they afford in common with material ones, is owing to his infinite Bounty, Goodness and Love; and is a divine Pleasure arising in the divine Mind, from giving and communicating himself, and the Treasures of Perfections, Glory and Happiness to Creatures who are capable of knowing them, tasting, relishing and enjoying them with him. By which Means he enjoys even their Enjoyment of him. He is pleased with their Pleasure, he is delighted in their Delight, and rejoices in their Joy. *Blessed be the Lord*, says the holy Psalmist, *who hath Pleasure in the Prosperity of his Servant.* Psal. xxxv. 27.

Now the different Degrees of this Joy arising from intelligent and free Creatures depend, *First*, upon their different Behaviour towards God, the different Use and Application of their Liberty and Free-Will; and where this is equal, *Secondly*, upon different natural Qualities and Capacities of their Spirits^a. For, no Doubt,

^a S. Mac. Hom. 29. c. 5. *ad fin.*

there are different Degrees of Capacity, of Size and Dimension (as I may say) in Spirits, as well as in Bodies. There are as certainly different Degrees in the Understandings and Wills of our Souls, as there are different Degrees in the Stature and Strength of our Bodies; and the heavenly Spirits differ from one another in the Degrees of their Knowledge and Love of God, as much as the heavenly Bodies differ from one another in Light and Heat: And at the Resurrection, one of the Blessed will differ from another in Happiness, as one Star differeth from another Star in Glory.

That God's Delight, in spiritual Natures, is in Proportion to their good Behaviour towards him, is plain. For, there can no Doubt be made, but that God takes more Pleasure in the lowest of the lowest Order of the blessed Spirits, than in the highest of the highest Order of the rebellious and fallen Angels.

And in those whose Love and Fidelity have been equal, in Proportion to their several Powers and Capacities, God's Delight in them is different, according to their different Degrees of Excellency and Perfection: And by how much the Powers and Capacities of the highest Orders of Spirits, the Cherubim and Seraphim, are greater and nobler than those of the lowest Order of Angels; by so much is the Joy and Delight greater, which God takes in the first, than in the last.

And thus also it is with Regard to Men. This is self-evident, that God takes more Pleasure in Men of the lowest Degree of Virtue and Goodness, than in wicked Men of the

highest and most exalted natural Capacities. But where the Love, Duty and Obedience have been equal, there the Measure of God's Joy will be proportionable to the Measure of Mens Happiness; and the Measure of their Happiness will be proportionable to the Measure of their Capacities: As our blessed Lord does plainly intimate, in his Answer to the Request of *Zebedee's Children*, who, by their Mother, had desired that they might be his greatest Favourites in his Kingdom. *Matth. xx. 23.* He saith unto them, *Ye shall drink indeed of my Cup, and be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with,* [*i. e.* Ye shall behave your selves as it is necessary for all those to behave themselves who are to inherit eternal Life: Ye shall, like me, make your Way to Glory thro' Sufferings.] *but to sit on my right Hand, and on my left, is not mine to give,* [*i. e.* the highest Degrees of Glory and Happiness are not mine to dispose of, out of Partiality, Favour, or Affection] *but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.* [*i. e.* supposing the Degrees of Love and Obedience to have been proportionably equal, they shall enjoy the highest and greatest Degrees of Glory and Happiness, whom the Father of Spirits, and Creator and Former of all Things, has fitted with the highest and greatest Capacities.] The greatest Glory is prepared for those whom God has prepared for it.

From what has been hitherto said, in General, we may conceive that the Grounds and Motives of God's Rejoycing more, over one great and notorious Sinner converted, than over many

Persons

Persons of common and ordinary Virtue, may be chiefly these Three, *viz.*

1. That in the Conversion of a great and notorious Sinner, the divine Attributes and Perfections are more gloriously manifested and displayed.

2. That the greatest Sinners, when thoroughly converted, often prove the greatest Saints.

3. That the Conversion of a great and notorious Sinner is apt to have a good Effect and great Influence upon others, and to produce more Conversions.

1. *First*, In the Conversion of a great and notorious Sinner, the divine Attributes and Perfections are more gloriously manifested and displayed, than in many Persons of common and ordinary Virtue.

In Persons of common Piety, the Power of God appears like what it is in the common Course of Nature; but in the Conversion of a great Sinner, it strikes us with Wonder and Surprize, as in a Miracle. The first Case is like guiding and governing, by an established Rule, the Things already in Being; the last is like a new Creation.

The greater the Difficulty of the Work is, the greater must be the Wisdom and Power that effect it. A common Grace is sufficient for a common Virtue; but the Conversion of a great and extraordinary Sinner must be the Work of a great and extraordinary Grace. The repeated Injuries and Offences, which proceed from meer Ignorance, are easily born with and forgiven; but wilful and malicious Offences against

infinite Majesty and infinite Love, require the Long-suffering, and the Mercy of a God to bear with and forgive. The Temper of Earth, or Flesh, is soft, and pliable, and easy to be worked upon; but what a Power must that be which breaks in Pieces and dissolves Rocks harder than the nether Millstone? A small Force will remove a light Burden; but it must be Omnipotence that removes Mountains. In Persons of common Goodness, who have never run any great Length in Sin, and who have only the common Weaknesses and Infirmities of human Nature to strive with; in such, I say, the Remains of earthly, or carnal Inclinations, may be overcome without God's exerting an uncommon and signal Power. But to work upon an inveterate, obstinate, hardened Sinner; to penetrate soften, melt and dissolve his Heart of Stone; to remove the Mountains of sinful Habits the Sinner has heaped one upon another; to quench the Violence of the Fire of Lust; to lay and calm the furious Storms of Passions which agitate and toss the Soul, and make it like a troubled and tempestuous Sea; to open the blinded Eyes of the Understanding, and to command the Light to shine out of Darkness; to quicken one dead in Trespases and Sins, and to raise him from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness; to change Men from ^aLions and Wolves into Sheep and Lambs; from the most hurtful and pernicious, into the most innocent and useful Creatures; to convert the Height of

^aIsai. xi. 6.

Pride and Obstinacy into the lowest Humility, and most pliable Obedience; to make a Man hate what he loved, and love what he hated; to make him not only love God, but hate himself; to make him shun and abhor the Pleasures he courted, and embrace and rejoyce in the Sufferings he dreaded; to bring a Man to account the greatest Evils of the World his greatest Blessings; to make him esteem ^a Poverty to be his Riches; Contempt his Glory ^b; and Sufferings his Happiness, out of Love to, and in Imitation of the Son of God, and Saviour of Mankind, who has canonized ^c these States with his blessed Mouth, and sanctified and enabled them, by his heavenly Example, to make a Man shut his ^d Eyes to all Things visible, and open them only for Things invisible; to take off his ^e Thoughts, his Heart, Desire, Affections, Relish and Delight from this World, and Things present and temporal, to fix them entirely upon God, and Things future and eternal; these are such wondrous Metamorphoses and Changes as loudly speak themselves the Work of an Almighty Hand. These are the Master-strokes of God, and Miracles of Grace. Here the Treasures of the divine Long-suffering and Mercy, Wisdom and Power, are displayed in their full Lustre. These are the most glorious Trophies and Triumphs of victorious and almighty Love.

2. The *Second* Motive and Ground of greater Joy in God over one great and notorious Sin.

^a Luke vi. 20. 2 Cor. vi. 10.

^b 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

^c Matth. v. 3. Acts v. 41. Luke vi. 20.

^d Psal. cxix.

37. ^e Col. iii. 2. 1 John ii. 15. Rom. viii. 5.

ner converted, more than over a great Number of Persons of common and ordinary Piety, may be supposed to be this, That the greatest Sinners, when thoroughly converted, often proving the greatest Saints, they attain greater Degrees of Glory and Happiness.

For, so infinite is the Generosity of the divine Nature, that the greater Joy and Delight we have in God, the greater Joy and Delight God has in us. The more we possess him, the more he possesses us. The more we partake in his Happiness, the more he partakes in ours.

Now that great Sinners, when thoroughly converted, should prove great Saints, is natural and easy to conceive. For, the same Force and Vigour of Mind, which, when applied to Evil, occasioned great and enormous Crimes, when directed and applied to good Objects, and especially when assisted by the omnipotent Spirit of God; will as certainly produce as great and uncommon Virtues: But we have infinitely better Authority than our own Reasoning in this Case. Our blessed Saviour, who perfectly knows those Hearts which he has made, has given us the Process of the Repentance both of common and extraordinary Sinners: And has told us, that *they will love most to whom most is forgiven; but to whom little is forgiven, the same will love little.* Luke vii. 43, 47. Now they, that love but little, will do and suffer but little, and will obtain but a little Reward, and consequently will occasion but little Joy to the divine Mind. On the Contrary, the great and enormous

enormous Sinner, when touched and struck with a due Sight and Sense of his Sins, is almost ready to sink under the insupportable Load and Burden; he is cut to the Quick, his Heart is wounded, and bleeds within him, when he reflects upon the outrageous Injuries and Affronts he has put upon adorable and infinite Love: But when he feels the heavy Load removed by that almighty Hand he has so proudly resisted, and the cutting Pains assuaged by that infinite Goodness he has so ungratefully abused: When, I say, the returning and repenting Sinner feels, and is sensible of the Love of God, in the free Pardon and Forgiveness of all his Sins, it must produce in him a Sense of Gratitude and Love, proportionable to the Greatness of his Misery and God's Mercy. *To whomsoever much is forgiven, the same will love much;* and a great Love will produce a great Faith, and a great Hope; and these will produce a great Resignation, and abandon to the Will, Providence, and Conduct of God, a great Obedience to his Commands, and an inviolable Fidelity to the Motions of Grace; and a great Fidelity to God's Grace will occasion greater Measures of Grace; and greater Degrees of Grace will produce greater Degrees of Purity and Sanctity; and the greater Degrees of Holiness here will be rewarded with greater Degrees of Happiness hereafter; and the greater the Glory and Happiness is which is attained by a sinful Creature, the greater is the Joy and Delight of its Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

3. The last Ground and Motive of great Joy in God over one great Sinner that repenteth, more than over a great Number of Persons of common and ordinary Goodness is, that the Conversion of one great and notorious Sinner is apt to have a great Influence and good Effect upon others, and to produce more Conversions.

The Repentance of a great and notorious Sinner is a great Motive and Encouragement to others to repent and be converted, as it sets before their Eyes a sensible Demonstration, a living Instance and Example of the Goodness and Power of God in pardoning the Sinner, and overcoming his Sin; which is a great Argument and Inducement to them, to throw themselves at the Feet of their offended God, and Father, who has dealt so graciously by others, whose Mercy is as infinite as his Majesty.

But besides this, Great Sinners, when converted, are usually more zealous in labouring, to the Utmost of their Power, to convert others. They know, by Sense and Experience, the Sweetness of the divine Goodness; they have tasted and seen how gracious the Lord is, and would fain have communicated to others the delightful Impressions they feel so lively upon their own Spirits; they would fain have that God loved by others, whom they find so lovely themselves. They have been forgiven much, and they love much; and Love is the most active and powerful Principle in human Nature. It is the very Life of the Soul, as the

Soul

Soul is the Life of the Body. It animates, quickens, and sets on Work all the Springs of Action, all the Powers and Faculties of Soul and Body; and where a Man is thoroughly penetrated and possessed with the Love of God, there is nothing which he would not freely do and suffer, to promote the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Men, to seek and recover the wandering and lost Sheep, to bring back Sinners to God, by sincere Conversion and Repentance.

David, who was as remarkable for his Repentance as for his Sin, says, in his penitential Devotions, that if God would magnify his Mercy in the Forgiveness of his Sin, and restore him to, and establish him in his Favour and Love, he should be an happy Instrument of gaining others to God. *Then, says he, shall I teach thy Ways unto the wicked, and Sinners shall be converted unto thee.* Psal. li. 13.

And, for another Instance, see how powerfully the Spirit of Love wrought in the great *S. Paul*! Who, of the greatest of Sinners, became the greatest of Saints; of a Persecutor, became a Preacher of the Faith, and of a devouring Wolf, became a most tender and vigilant Pastor of Christ's Flock. *I am, says he, the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God: But, by the Grace of God, I am what I am; and his Grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all.* 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. And indeed the Picture of his divine Soul, which he

has

has left us in his divine Writings, is animated with, breathes and speaks an Heart all on Fire with divine Love, desiring nothing but to be wholly sacrificed and consumed for the Glory of God and the Good of Men.

Now as great Sinners, when converted, do promote the Glory of God, and the Happiness of Men, by being instrumental in the Conversion of others; so do they also encrease their own Glory and Happiness thereby. The Glory of every converted Sinner will reflect a Lustre upon the Instrument of his Conversion, and add a Jewel to his Crown of Glory. Thus, as the Prophet *Daniel* expresses it, Dan. xiii. 3. *They that are Teachers shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.* They shall not only shine as the Stars with their own proper Light and Glory, but also as the Brightness of the Firmament, which is a Lustre arising from the collected and united Rays of Light diffused by many Stars.

So that, upon this Head, the divine Goodness finds a double Motive of Joy in the Conversion of a great Sinner. *First*, As he may be the Instrument of bringing many others to Happiness and Glory. And, *Secondly*, As their happy Eternity reflects upon, and redounds to him, and encreases the Measure of his Happiness and Glory.

These, we may conceive, are some of the Grounds and Motives of the great Joy, in God, upon the Conversion of a great Sinner.

The same also are Motives of Rejoycing to the holy Angels of God.

These blessed and generous Spirits, being all Love and Goodness, feel fresh Transports of Delight upon every new Prospect of Glory to God, and Happiness to Men.

But what adds a more peculiar Relish to their Pleasure, and makes their Joy, upon the Conversion of a great Sinner, more quick and lively, is the Unexpectedness and Surprize of it. To see an obstinate and inveterate Sinner, who had long resisted and rendered vain all the Attempts of infinite Wisdom, Power, and Love; to gain him, whose hardened Heart was proof against the Charms, and even the Terrors of the Almighty, and whom they had given over for gone: To see such a Sinner, I say, repent, submit, return from the Error and Evil of his Ways, and become a Votary to God and Goodness, must make a livelier Impression of Delight upon the holy Angels, than the Prospect of Happiness for many others, for whom they never were in Pain. As we feel a quicker Sense of Joy for the Recovery of one dear Friend, whose Life we had despaired of, than for the Health of many others who never were in Danger. Nothing causes a brisker Sense of Pleasure, than the unexpected Change of Sorrow into Joy. The holy Angels rejoyce over a converted Sinner, as over a Brother that was lost and is found, was dead, and is alive again.

Thus, *There is Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over Ninety and nine just Persons, who need no Repentance.*

II. Come

II. Come we now, in the Second Place, to apply this Passage to our blessed Lord's Design, and to make Use of it,

1. For a Motive and Encouragement for Sinners to repent.

2. As a Motive and Encouragement to Sinners, to draw near to our blessed Lord, as the proper Means to that End. And,

1. Can there be any greater Motive and Encouragement for Sinners to repent, than the Assurance that their Conversion will occasion Joy even in God himself? For God to rejoyce in any one, what Tongue can tell, or Heart conceive the full Value of that Expression? To be the Object of God's Joy, how highly favoured, honoured, beloved, how glorious and happy must that Creature be! Whoever we delight in is Master of our Hearts, and of our selves, and engages all the Powers of our Souls and Bodies in his Favour. How blessed then must be the State of a true Penitent, who has gained the Love, and won the very Heart of God, and engaged infinite Wisdom, and almighty Power, on his Side! God's Rejoycing over a converted Sinner can signify nothing less than his Favour and Goodness towards him, his Love to him, and Friendship for him, and the Effects of these, the doing for him all that God can do for him, and the giving him all that God can give him. God's Rejoycing over a penitent Sinner implies the full and free Pardon and Forgiveness of his Sins; the taking him under the special Care of his all-seeing Eye, and watchful Providence; the giving him his holy Spirit to direct and govern,

vern, to purify and sanctify him, to root out all Vices, and impart to him, and implant in his Soul all the Virtues and Graces which are necessary to make him an Instrument of Glory to God, and of Good to Men, in the State of Life to which God has called him; the assisting him in Temptations; the succouring him in Dangers; the strengthening, supporting him under, and enabling him to bear with humble Patience and Resignation, in and for the Love of God, all the Sufferings, either outward or inward, which the divine Wisdom shall see necessary either for Chastisement and Correction, or for the proving, or purifying his Soul: In short, the conducting him safely thro' all the Perils of the Wilderness of this World, to the heavenly *Canaan*; and there giving him the full and free Possession and Enjoyment of all his Works, and of himself, of his Light and of his Love, and of the infinite Treasures of his Beauties and Perfections, Happiness and Glory; and there rejoycing and delighting himself in him, and with him, to all Eternity. All this is implied in God's Rejoycing at the Conversion of a Sinner.

And can there be any greater Encouragement to Repentance? If any of us had justly forfeited our Estates, Liberties and Lives, by Treason and Rebellion against the wisest and best of Princes, and were in his Power, and at his Mercy, should we need any other Motive to throw our selves at his Feet, than to be assured from his own Mouth, that if we were but sensible of, and sorry for our past Crimes;

Y

would

would humbly confess them; and beg Pardon for them, and promise all Love, Fidelity and Obedience for the future; he would not only freely forgive us, and restore us to the full Possession of all we had lost, but admit us into his royal Presence, take us into his Bosom, and place us in his very Heart, and make us Friends and Favourites? Could we, in such Circumstances, resist such Love and Goodness, would it not conquer and subdue our Hearts, and make our Souls more the Captives of his Goodness, than our Bodies were of his Power? Would it not engage us to live wholly for him? and to dedicate and sacrifice to his Service all that we held of his Bounty? And is not this the Sinner's Case exactly, only infinitely heightened, with Regard to Almighty God? For what Comparison is there between the Injuries done to earthly Kings, and the Offences committed against the adorable Majesty of Heaven?

What is the Loss of Liberty, and this Light, in Comparison of being held in eternal Chains of Darkness? What is the Loss of all this World, if compared to the Loss of the Kingdom of Heaven? What is the Loss of a temporal Life, in Comparison of eternal Death? And what is the Friendship of all Men, in Comparison of the Favour of God? Nothing, and less than Nothing.

Why then will we not do that for God, which we would do for Man? Why will we not do that for a glorious Eternity, which we would do for a miserable Life? Why are not our Faces covered with Shame and Confusion?

sion? Why do not our Hearts melt within us, and our Eyes pour out Floods of Tears, for our infinite Ingratitude against infinite Love? That Love by which we were made, by which we are preserved, redeemed, and sanctified; that Love which made all Things for us, and us for himself; and which desires nothing so much as to give himself to us, as he gave himself for us. Why do we not abhor our Sins, which are as hateful as God is amiable? Why will we not break with our Vices, which are not more Enemies of God's Glory, than our own Happiness? Why do we not desire to be freed from the tormenting Slavery of those cursed Tyrants, the Devil, and our own Lusts and Passions, and to give our selves up to our rightful Lord, whose Service is perfect Freedom; and thereby become not only his Servants, but his Sons? Let us not fear, that upon our Return to God, we should meet with a Repulse, Frowns, or a cold Reception. No, God is not only our King, but our Father: And for the greater Encouragement of Sinners to repent and return to him, he has condescended to represent his Love to Men, by the tenderest and strongest Passions in human Nature, by the Affection of Parents towards their Children*. Let us but return to him with humble, contrite, penitent and obedient Hearts, full of Love to him, Hatred to our Sins, and Abhorrence of our selves; and he will receive and embrace us with all the Tenderness of

* Psal. ciii. 13.

the most indulgent Father towards his best beloved Son^a: Nay, with a Tenderneſs as far ſurpaſſing that of any human Parent, as the ^bHeaven is higher than the Earth, and God is greater than Man; and by doing this, we ſhall comfort and edify the Church below, we ſhall rejoyce the Bleſſed above; nay, we ſhall rejoyce the very Heart of God himſelf, and be the De-light of Heaven and Earth.

2. And Laſtly, This Paſſage is a great Encouragement to Sinners to come and draw near to our bleſſed Lord, as the proper Means to become true and perfect Penitents. It was ſpoke expreſſly for this Purpoſe; and as it was a Vindication of thoſe poor Sinners in the Goſpel, it is an Encouragement to all others. And to whom ſhould repenting Sinners apply themſelves, but to him who came to call Sinners to Repentance, and to ſave them from their Sins? To him who is all Love and Tenderneſs to receive them, all Wiſdom to teach them, and all Power to enable them to do what he teaches them; to him who can forgive all their Sins, and heal all their Infirmities; to him who is both willing and able to relieve all their Neceſſities, and ſupply all their Wants?

But how ſhall we come and draw near to this bleſſed Saviour? Where are we to ſeek for him, where ſhall we find him? He is not hard to be found, we need not go far to ſeek him, he is very near every one of us. And yet as near as the Place is to us, it is as unknown

^a Luke xv. 11. *ad finem.*

^b Pſal. ciii. 11. and Iſai. xlix. 15.

to, and unfrequented by most of us, as the most distant Places of the Universe. It is in a Manner to send Men to the Height above, or to the Depth beneath^a, to direct them to seek Jesus Christ in their Hearts; such absolute Strangers are they to the Place, and so unacquainted with the Way to it.

Yet this is the Place^b where he is present to every one of us; where he desires to be sought, and where he delights to be found. It is a great and infallible Truth, that our blessed Saviour is always most intimately present with us; he is within us, within our very Souls: He is as really and truly present with our Souls in Spirit, as ever he was with the Jews in Body: He is as really, truly and actually present to our Souls in his divine Nature, as he was present with the poor Sinners mentioned in the Gospel, in his human Nature.

Let us then set our God and Saviour always before our Eyes; let us, by a lively and steadfast Faith, consider the blessed Jesus, as always present with us, and in us, as knowing our Thoughts, hearing our Words, and seeing our Actions. And let this Faith have its proper Influence upon our Hearts and Lives, and make us watch over all our Thoughts, Words and Works.

Especially let us be continually and perpetually lifting up our Hearts to him, and pouring out our Hearts before him in humble and fervent Prayer. And since he is still the same

^a Rom. x. 6, 7.

^b 2 Cor. vi. 16. and John xiv. 25.

meek, merciful and compassionate Saviour, and the same omnipotent God he ever was, let us beg of him that he would work, inwardly in our Souls, those Miracles of Power and Goodness which he wrought, outwardly, upon the Bodies of Men, when he was on Earth.

Let us beg of him, that he would but speak the Word only, and our Souls shall be healed^a; that he would cure our spiritual Blindness^b, open the Eyes of our Understanding, that we may see the Wonders of his Law; that we may discover the Will of our God, and our Duty, in all our Ways; that he would cure our spiritual Deafness^c, that he would open the Ears of our Heart, that we may listen and attend to the still, calm Voice of his holy Inspirations, his holy Touches and Motions upon our Souls and Consciences, that he would cure our spiritual Lameness, strengthen the Weakness of our Will and Resolution, that we may not only walk, but run^d the Way of God's Commandments; that he would raise us from the Death^e of Sin to the Life of Righteousness.

Finally, Let us beg of the Shepherd of Israel, that he would vouchsafe to be our Shepherd^f, and take us for the Sheep of his Pasture; being assured, that then we can lack nothing. Let us beg of him, that he would wash, in his own Blood, all the Stains we have contracted by straying and wandering from him in the miry Paths of Sin; and then, tho' our Sins were

^a Matth. viii. 8.

^d Psal. cxix. 32.

^b Isai. vi. 10.

^e Ephes. ii. 1.

^c Matth. xiii. 14, 15.

^f Psal. xxiii. 1.

as Scarlet^a, yet being washed in the Blood of the Lamb, they shall be as Wool. Let us beg of him to feed us in a green Pasture^b, to nourish us with himself, with his most precious Body and Blood^c, and to lead us forth beside the Waters of Comfort, to strengthen and refresh us by the Streams of living Water^d, flowing from his holy Spirit. Let us beg of him to convert our Souls, and lead us forth into the Paths of Righteousness, for his Name Sake. Let us beg of him to take us into his Fold, and to watch over and secure us from all Danger, and at last to set us, with his Sheep, at his right Hand^e, in the great Day of Judgment.

Let us address our selves to him in the Words of the royal Shepherd, who was also once a wandering Sheep, and say, *We have gone astray like Sheep^f that are lost. O seek thy Servants^g, feed them, and lift them up for ever.* Amen.

Now to God the Father, *who brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep^h, and to the Lamb that was slain, and redeemed us unto God by his Bloodⁱ, and to the eternal Spirit, through whom he offered himself without Spot to God^k, be all Glory, Dominion, Praise and Adoration for ever.* Amen.

^a Isai. i. 18.

^b Psal. xxiii. 2.

^c John vi. 54, 55, 56.

^d John vii. 38.

^e Matth. xxv. 33.

^f Psal. cxix. ult.

^g Psal. xxviii. 9.

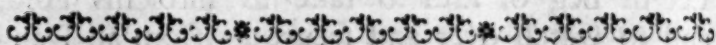
^h Heb. xiii. 20.

ⁱ Rev. v. 9.

^k Heb. ix.



SERMON XVII.



P S A L. CXIII. 5.

*Who is like unto the Lord our God, that
bath his Dwelling so high; and yet
humbleth himself to behold the Things
that are in Heaven and Earth?*



THESE Words are a divine Rapture of Admiration, which the holy Psalmist was seized with, in Contemplation of the Condescension of the Creator towards his Creatures: He is struck with Amazement, to find infinite Humility joyned with infinite Majesty, to observe God, who is exalted so infinitely high, to stoop so low, as to be concerned for such *Nothings* as all Creatures are, in Comparison with their Creator. But as this voluntary Abasement of the divine Majesty is so far from any real Lessening, that it rather augments the divine Greatness and
Glory:

Glory: So the holy Psalmist endeavours all he can, if it were possible, to exalt and magnify God, as much as God humbleth and abaseth himself. He challenges the Universe to shew any Thing comparable to him, and in a Transport of Wonder and Acknowledgment, cries out, *Who is like unto the Lord our God, who hath his Dwelling so high; and yet humbleth himself to behold the Things that are in Heaven and Earth?*

This Passage affords us a natural Occasion to consider, and a proper Foundation to treat of an Attribute of the divine Nature, which, tho' most amiable, glorious and wonderful, yet has been least taken Notice of, not to say wholly overlooked, by most of those who have treated of the divine Perfections; and this is, The Humility of God: An Attribute to which all Creatures owe their Being and their Happiness, and to which the Sons of Men stand indebted, not only for their Creation and Preservation, but much more for their Redemption: An Attribute that renders the Majesty of Heaven approachable, and even more easy of Access than the pettiest Princes of the Earth: An Attribute which, notwithstanding the infinite Distance and Disproportion between the Creature and the Creator, inclines the Creator to descend from his Height, to shorten the Distance, and in a Manner to put himself upon a Level with his Creatures; nay, and, in some Cases, to humble himself, and stoop, as it were, not only below himself, but even below them too: An Attribute which disposes him not only to commu-
nicate

nicate and give himself to those holy and blessed Spirits above, who with Love and Gratitude receive him; but even perpetually to offer himself to us miserable and sinful Mortals, who perpetually despise and reject the gracious Offer.

In treating upon this Subject it will be natural,

1. To consider, more at large, this divine Quality and Attribute, *viz.* The Humility of God.

2. To shew the Effect and Influence the Consideration of it ought to have upon us.

1. *First*, Then I am to consider this divine Quality and Attribute, *viz.* The Humility of God.

As whatever may be affirmed of God, may be affirmed of him infinitely, and whatever God is, he is infinitely: So the holy Psalmist, in this Place, does not only speak of God as humble, but as infinitely and superlatively so, humble beyond all Conception and Comparison; he challenges the whole Universe of created Nature, from the highest immortal Spirit in Heaven to the lowest Mortal upon Earth, to shew a Being endued with so much Humility, as the adorable Majesty of the great God of Heaven and Earth. Whatever one Creature can do for another cannot be so great an Instance and Act of Condescension, as what the Creator does for the Creature, by reason of the infinite Distance and Disproportion there is between the Creator and the Creature: God is infinitely higher exalted above the highest Creature, than the highest Creature is above the lowest; and there is an

in-

infinitely greater Difference between God and the highest Angel, than between the most glorious Angel and a Grain of Sand; and, consequently, the noblest Acts that God can do for the noblest Creatures in Heaven are Instances of infinitely lower Condescension, than the lowest Offices of the most exalted Seraphim to the vilest Reptile and Worm upon Earth.

So that God is not only humble, but the humblest of all Beings, as far exceeding and surpassing all other Beings, in Lowliness and Condescension, as he excels them in Majesty and Glory.

And it is his infinite Height that makes the least Act of Condescension in him to be so low. It is from hence, that he hath his Dwelling so high, that the Psalmist calls it an Humbling of himself, to behold even the Things that are in Heaven, as well as those on Earth, that he accounts it an Instance of Lowliness and Condescension in God, not only to extend his Care to us miserable Mortals here on Earth, but even to cast his Regard upon, and vouchsafe a Look to the sublimest created Intelligences, and most glorious Spirits in Heaven.

Now the Origin, Spring and Source of the Humility of God, is the infinite Generosity and Goodness of the divine Nature, which, not content, as it were, to enjoy himself alone, the infinite Treasures of the divine Perfections moved him to go out of himself to seek for, invent and make other Beings besides himself, to whom he might communicate himself, and make them

Sharers,

Sharers, Partakers and Possessors with himself of his infinite Glory, Delights and Happiness.

Hence we may form this Description of the divine Humility, *viz.* That it is a voluntary, generous and disinterested Condescension of God, to regard and apply himself to, to have Commerce, Dealing, and Communication with Things below him, for their Good.

I do not intend to pursue this Description thro' its several Parts and Branches, but only to give some Proofs of this Attribute, being in the divine Nature, and to demonstrate this, not so much by Way of Speculation, as by Experience and Fact.

Indeed all Creatures do bear Testimony to the divine Humility, and all spiritual and immortal Natures are eternal Monuments of it: All we, who are here present, are living Witnesses of it, and the Circumstances we are in, and the Work we are about, are sensible and infallible Proofs of it. And above all, nothing can be a greater Demonstration of the divine Humility, than the suffering so miserable a Creature, under a Pretence of displaying it, to fully and obscure the Beauties and Glories of this blessed Attribute, by so very defective and imperfect Conceptions and Representations of it.

But the Evidence I intend chiefly to insist upon, and which indeed the Text points out to me, and directs me to, is God's general Behaviour towards, and Dealing with intelligent Natures, or Spirits, whether Angels, or Men, signified in the Text by his beholding the Things that are in Heaven and Earth, and which the

Psalmist

Psalmist accounts an Effect of his unparalleled Condescension and Humility.

To behold may either signify to look upon, and consider a Thing, with Design to know its Nature, or it may signify to regard a Thing either with Love, or with Pity, in order to shew it either Favour or Compassion.

By the First Way, God's beholding the Things in Heaven and Earth may very justly signify the Creation of spiritual Natures, Angels and Men; for it must be at their Creation, that God first beheld them actually existing out of himself.

In the Second Sense of beholding, and as it is a Regard of Love, God's beholding the Things that are in Heaven may properly signify all that God does for the Happiness of the holy Spirits above, all that Intercourse with, that Manifestation and Communication of himself, of his Light and of his Love to those blessed and glorious Spirits, in which all their Glory and Happiness does consist, which is the Essence of Happiness, and the very Heaven of Heaven it self.

In the Third Sense of beholding, and as it is a Regard of Compassion, God's beholding the Things that are on Earth naturally signifies all that God does for the Preservation and Redemption of Mankind: And all these are so many Acts and Instances of infinite Humility and Condescension in God, they are evident Effects of it, and, consequently, infallible Proofs of it.

As to proving God's Humility, from his beholding the Things that are in Heaven, that is, from God's Dealing and Commerce with the angelical Nature, I shall say but little of it, and that for a very good Reason, because I know but little of it: I shall only speak a Word or two concerning their Creation, and that only in common with that of Man.

But the Proof of the divine Humility and Condescension, I intend to insist chiefly upon, is, God's beholding the Things that are on Earth, that is, his Dealings with, and Behaviour towards, the Wonders that he has done, and still does for the Children of Men: And this, not only because it is a Subject more suitable to our Capacities and Necessities, what is more intelligible to us, and useful for us; but also because it is a more evident Proof of the Point in Hand: For, the lower Acts of Condescension are, the stronger Proofs are they of Humility, and the lower the Being, or Nature, is, to which they are done, the lower are the Acts of Condescension; and Man being, as the Scripture affirms, made lower than the Angels, it is evident, that whatever God does for Man is an Act of greater Humility, and lower Condescension than what he does for the Angels. I proceed, therefore, to consider the Humility and Condescension of the divine Majesty, with Regard to Man, and that,

1. In his Creation.
2. In his Preservation. And,
3. In his Redemption.

I. *First*, then, the Creation of Man, and indeed of all spiritual Natures and Substances, is an Act of Condescension in God.

It is a most evident Truth, That nothing but God himself is equal to himself; nothing but God himself is an Object worthy of God; nothing is the proper Object of God's Thought and Contemplation, but God himself; nothing but the eternal Son of God, who is the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, in whom God sees himself, is worthy of God's Regard: And whenever God vouchsafes to apply his Thoughts, and his Regard to; whenever he beholds (as the Text expresses it) any Thing that is not himself, he condescends to behold a Thing not equal to himself, and for that Reason not deserving his Regard. Therefore God cannot behold the sublimest Creature, even in Idea, without casting his View upon a Thing less than himself, and consequently he cannot will to behold that Thing in actual Existence out of himself, but he must will to behold a Thing infinitely below himself. The Psalmist calls it, an Humbling of himself for God to behold even the Things that are in Heaven, to employ his Thoughts and Power in the Creation even of the highest Angels; but even much lower does God humble himself, when he vouchsafes to behold the Things that are on Earth, when he employs his Thoughts, and exerts his Power in the Creation of Man, a Creature so much lower than the Angels: And much lower still does God descend, when he employs his Regard, his Care and Concern
for

for fallen Man, not only now below the Angels, but even infinitely below himself, infinitely short of himself, and what he was in his original State at his Creation. And still infinitely lower does God humble himself, when the supreme Majesty of Heaven stoops to the lowest Offices, for the lowest Creatures upon Earth, for sinful Dust and Ashes. To make which more fully appear, I proceed to consider,

2. The divine Humility and Condescension in the Preservation of Mankind.

When we consider the many open and known Dangers we are surrounded with, and the many secret and invisible ones we are perpetually exposed to, from the ill Influences of the Planetary Bodies, from the Corruption and Disorder of all the Elements of our own Bodies, and of every Thing in Nature, from the Subtilty and Malice of evil Men, and evil Spirits; Dangers which we our selves can neither foresee, nor avoid, neither prevent, nor remedy. We cannot form a more just and lively Image and Representation of human Life, in this Respect, than that of a Man walking blindfold, or in the Dark, in most rugged and uneven Way, upon the very Brink and Edge of a Precipice, where the very first false Step and wry Motion infallibly throws him Headlong into the Deep.

Nothing but a divine Power and Providence can direct, and support, and secure this Man from falling in every Step he takes: Nothing but the Power and Wisdom of God could support a Man in such Circumstances, for many
Years,

Years, as he could not, if left to himself, continue in for one Moment.

But setting aside the unknown Dangers we may have escaped, by the secret Interposition and Prevention of divine Providence; how many known Dangers have we been delivered out of, by the visible Intervention of the Hand of God, when all Hopes have failed us from the Help of Man? Dangers which seemed ready to devour us, and to have swallowed us up quick; if God himself had not been on our Side, and rescued us by an extraordinary Act of his Providence? I believe there are few Men who have not, some Time or other, sensibly experienced the Effects of God's watchful Care and Providence, in the wonderful Preservation of their Lives.

But besides the particular Acts of God's Providence, in the immediate Application of himself to preserve Men from Danger, and to save their Life from Destruction; the general Acts of his Care and Providence, whereby he constantly and uniformly provides all Necessaries and Conveniencies for the Support and Preservation of the whole Race of Mankind, are no less admirable than beneficial.

When we consider, that the Providence of God does so perpetually and incessantly watch over the Sons of Men, that there is not so much as one Moment of their Lives, in which it is not employed about them; that God, like a most tender and indulgent Father, will have us always under his Eye, and dare not trust us a Moment out of his Sight; and that what with

keeping us out of Harm's Way, and what with providing all Manner of Necessaries for us, we seem almost to have engrossed all the Thought and Care of the Deity to our selves; when we consider all this, I say, we cannot but stand amazed at the divine Humility and Condescension, and, in an Excess of Admiration, break out with the Psalmist, and say, *Lord, what is Man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that thou so regardest him!*

These are great and wonderful Instances, indeed, of the Lowliness of the most High, and yet are infinitely short of what I am going to speak of in the

Third Place, viz. The Humility and Condescension of God in the Redemption of Man.

The holy Scripture, which gives us the Account of the Creation, of the Fall, and of the Recovery of Man; and gives us frequent Relations of the personal Intercourse between God and Men: This holy Book, I say, is scarcely any Thing else, from the one End to the other, but one continued History of the divine Humility and Condescension.

When God was pleased to appear in Person, to those pure and holy Men the Patriarchs of old, in the Infancy and Innocency of the World, how wonderfully beautiful and delightful a Scene is it, to observe with what easiness and Affability God vouchsafed to converse with Men? One cannot seriously reflect upon the Intercourse between God and *Abraham*, for Instance, or *Moses*, without being struck with Admiration at the divine Condescension? One

cannot

cannot see the divine Immensity lessening, as it were, and contracting it self, the divine Glory and Majesty veiling and shortening itself, and submitting to proportion and accommodate it self to the Weakness and Narrowness of human Capacities; one cannot observe God putting himself upon the Level with Man, and him whose Majesty and Glory strikes the sublimest Spirits and highest Powers in Heaven, with reverential Awe, descending to Earth, and treating Mankind as if they were his Equals; conversing with them with the Freedom and Familiarity of a Friend! One cannot, I say, consider these Instances of infinite Humility in infinite Majesty, without feeling strong Emotions of Wonder and Delight.

And what is still more surprizing, we find this most adorable Greatness, not only stooping to proportion himself to the Littleness of human Nature, but submitting with the most amiable Sweetness and Mildness, patiently to bear with, and calmly to reason with, the Frowardness and Peevishness of human Passions, as in the remarkable Case of the Prophet *Jonah*. *Jonah* iv. 9, 10, 11.

If these Instances of the divine Humility surprize us, the following may amaze us.

To see the great King of Heaven stooping from his Height, and condescending himself to offer the Terms of Reconciliation to his rebellious Creatures! To see offended Majesty courting the Offenders to accept of Pardon! To see God persuading, entreating and beseeching Men to return to him, with such Earnest-

ness and Importunity, as if his very Life were bound up in them, and his own Happiness depended upon theirs! To see the holy Spirit of God striving with the Obstinacy and Perverseness of sinful Men, and opposing and endeavouring to overcome their Malice by his Love, their Wickedness by his Goodness, their Pride by his Humility, their Obstinacy by his unwearied Patience! To see the adorable Spirit of God, with infinite Long-suffering and Gentleness, submitting to the Contempt and Insults of such miserable despicable Wretches as sinful Mortals are! To observe, that notwithstanding their perpetual neglecting and rejecting his holy Motions, quenching his holy Flames, and stifling his holy Inspirations, he is not driven away, and provoked to forsake them by such ill Usage; but that as long as Life, and the Day of Grace lasts, he perpetually watches his Opportunity, and, in the proper Season, never fails to insinuate himself into the Sinner's Heart, and by secret, but lively and forcible Touches, either of Persuasion, or of Terror upon his Conscience, he urges him to forsake his Sins, and to return and throw himself at the Feet of his offended God and Father, who stands, with open Arms of Mercy, ready to embrace him! Is not this amazing?

If these Instances of the divine Condescension are amazing, the following may well fill us with Astonishment. And they are, in the Words of the Apostle, these that follow.

That Christ Jesus, who being in the Form of God thought it not Robbery to be equal

to God, should make himself of no Reputation, and take upon him the Form of a Servant, and be made in the Likeness of Men; and being found in Fashion as a Man, should humble himself, and become obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross!

That the Son of God, equal in Nature and Essence to the Father that begat him, being very God of very God, that God, I say, should become Man! That the Lord of Life and Glory, emptying and divesting himself of his Majesty, should descend from Heaven to Earth, and clothe himself with our Mortality and Misery, and when, he became Man, should appear in a Condition of Humanity no Ways suitable to his Divinity! But that the most high God should become the lowest of Men! That the Lord of all should become the Servant of all! That he, to whom all Honour, Glory, and Happiness do of Right belong, should submit himself to Contempt, Reproach, and a Life of Hardship and Sufferings! That the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, should suffer himself to be used like a Slave! That the holy one of *Israel* should bear to be looked upon, and condemned as a Criminal, and be numbred with the Transgressors! That the Author and Giver of Life, himself, should suffer Death! and all this for the vilest, most abject and worthless Creatures, for sinful and rebellious Dust and Ashes! That the just should suffer for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty! That offended Majesty should die for the Offenders, and God most holy, for sinful Man! This,

this is Humility indeed! This is the Depth of Humility! This is the Humility of God.

These Instances of the divine Condescension may well astonish us short-sighted Mortals: They astonish even the sublimest Spirits above, who, with all their Penetration, are not able to fathom this Abyss of divine Humility; but, as *S. Peter* represents them, are perpetually gazing upon, admiring, prying into, and desiring to penetrate further and further into these Mysteries. These are Things which the Angels desire to look into. *1 Pet. i. 12.*

These are such Instances of Humility, as not only astonish us, but strike us dumb with Astonishment. The common Saying, concerning Grief, *curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*, is equally true of Admiration: If the Object, which excites this Passion, be any Ways proportioned to our Understanding, our Passion easily discovers itself in suitable Expressions of Wonder and Surprise: But when the Object infinitely exceeds our Capacities, it over-powers our Faculties, and strikes us dumb. And, in all such Cases, Silence is the greatest Eloquence: And the inconceivable and inexpressible Humility of a crucified God is much more honoured by a silent Adoration, than by all the Tongues of Men and Angels. All we can say of this Mystery is, that whatever God does, he does like God, and that all the divine Actions are like the divine Nature, infinite and incomprehensible. *Who is like unto the Lord our God, who hath his Dwelling so high, and yet humbleth himself*

to behold the Things that are in Heaven and Earth!

2. I proceed now, in the Second Place, to shew the Effect and Influence which the Consideration of the divine Humility ought to have upon us, and that is to move us,

1. To Love, and

2. To Imitation.

1. The Consideration of the divine Humility ought to move us to love God.

Nothing is so great an Attractive, Nothing is so amiable and charming, Nothing makes so sure and speedy a Conquest of the Heart, as Humility joyned with Greatness. It gives a Beauty and Lustre, even to supreme Perfection, and renders it the Object of our Love. The Thoughts of infinite Power and Greatness, separated from the divine Condescension, would oppress us with Awe, and keep us at a Distance; but the Contemplation of infinite Humility, joyned with infinite Majesty, fills us, indeed, with Admiration; but that's a pleasing Passion, compounded of Wonder and Delight, fills us with Reverence and Love, enters into our Hearts, and draws them with sweet, but forcible Allurements, makes us desire, above all Things, to be approved of, and acceptable to so noble and generous a Nature, and puts us upon all Methods of seeking the divine Favour and Friendship. This then is the natural Effect of the Consideration of those Miracles of the divine Condescension, the Wonders that God has done for the Children of Men, to inspire their Hearts

with Love, Gratitude, Duty, and Obedience to God.

2. The Consideration of the divine Humility ought to move us to the Imitation of God, and that,

1. With Relation to God.

2. With Relation to Man.

1. It ought to move us to be humble, with Relation to God.

Indeed, strictly speaking, all that human Nature can possibly do, or suffer, for God, is not properly Humility, but strict Justice and bounden Duty. But as Men may be guilty of Pride, with Relation to God, when they elevate themselves, either in their Imaginations or Actions, beyond their Nature and Condition, so they may be said to be humble when they do the Contrary, tho' they do not thereby practise any Act of real Condescension, or do any Thing that is below themselves, but only below that false and imaginary Height, to which they had advanced themselves, in their own Idea. They are called Acts of Humility, because they are contrary to those of Pride. Thus Repentance, Sorrow and Shame for, and Confession of Sin, Resignation and Submission to the Chastisements due to it, are Acts of Humility, not as they are Acts of real Condescension to Things below us, but as they are opposite to those Acts of Pride, by which in sinning, and doing contrary to the Will of God, the Creature exalted itself above the Creator.

The Humility, then, that we are capable of exercising, and are bound to practise towards God, in Imitation of, and Return for, the divine Humility shewn towards us, is a free, generous and disinterested Regard to the Glory of God, as the Humility of God is a free, generous and disinterested Regard for the Good of Men.

And the general Acts and Instances of this Duty are,

(1.) A real, sincere, and unfeigned Conversion of our Souls to God; which implies in it, to be truly sorry for, and ashamed of, to detest, abhor, and forsake all our Sins, and Acts of Pride and Rebellion against our Creator; cheerfully and willingly to submit to all the Punishment the divine Wisdom and Justice shall see necessary to inflict upon us, for the Vindication and Reparation of his injured Honour and affronted Majesty; to implore his Mercy and Favour, and the Light of his Countenance, thro' the Merits of our adorable Saviour and Redeemer: And to make the Conversion complete, there must be,

(2.) A full, free, entire and irrevocable Donation of our selves to God; to be guided and governed, purified and sanctified, both in Soul and Body, in Heart and Life, by the Action and Operation of his holy Spirit, in and upon our Spirits, to be made perfect Instruments of his Will and Glory, under which is comprehended,

To adore the divine Majesty, with the lowest and most profound Humility and Prostration of Spirit, as the adorable Fountain of all Being and Perfection; acknowledging, from a most lively and sensible Conviction and Experience, in the Bottom of our Hearts, that we are Nothing, have Nothing, and can do Nothing of our selves; that we are Nothing, in Reality, but what he made us, have Nothing but what he gave us, can do Nothing but what he does for us; that our very Being, and all the Good that is in us, is wholly and entirely God's, God's Gift to us, and God's Action and Operation in us; that as all we have, and are, is wholly from God, so it ought to be wholly for God; as he created us, at first, out of Nothing, and redeemed us, afterwards, from a State worse than that of Nothing, it ought to be the chief Desire of our Souls, to answer the End and Intention which our Creator and Redeemer had in the Creation and Redemption of Mankind; as it is he that hath made us, and not we our selves, and as he made us for himself, not for our selves; so we ought, as to think Nothing of our selves, so to desire Nothing for our selves, but that God may be glorified in us, and by us, to the very Utmost of our Powers and Capacities, and to the utmost Extent of his Designs upon us. To this Purpose, we should give up our selves to him, who first gave us to our selves, and afterwards gave himself for us: We should, I say, give and resign up our selves, wholly, Soul, Body and Spirit, all that we have, and all that we are, with-

without Exception, or Reserve, as a Sacrifice to the divine Will and Pleasure, that God may do with us, and in us, what he shall judge most conducive to his own Glory, in Time, and to all Eternity.

This is the sovereign Homage, which is due from us to the supreme Being, and our sovereign Lord.

This is what we may call the Humility we owe to God, not as there is any Act of real Condescension in it, but as it is opposite to that Pride of our corrupted Nature which is always exalting itself above God, which makes us rob God of his Glory, to bestow it upon our selves, which moves us to make our selves our own End, and God only the Means to obtain that End. But,

2. *Secondly*, The Consideration of the divine Humility ought to excite us to an Imitation of it, with Relation to Man.

And the Instances we are to practise it in, the following Apostolical Precepts will shew. *Let every Man that is among you, not think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but think soberly^a. Mind not high Things, but condescend to Men of low Estate^b. Let Nothing be done through Strife, or Vain-Glory, but in Lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every Man on his own Things, but every Man also on the Things of others^c. Be kindly affectioned one to another; with brotherly Love, in Honour,*

^a Rom. xii. 3.

^b 16.

^c Phil. ii. 3. 4.

preferring one another^a. We ought, every one of us, with the humble *S. Paul*, to esteem our selves the least of Saints, and the greatest of Sinners. We should behave our selves, in Words and Actions, with all due Reverence and Respect to our Superiors, with Affability and Chearfulness to our Equals, and with all Humanity and Condescension to our Inferiors. Let our Condition be never so high, to think Nothing too low for us to stoop to, that may serve to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind. We should be ready to do all Good, and ready to forgive all Evil, according to *S. Paul's* Exhortation, *Col. iii. 12, 13. Put on, says he, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. If any Man have a Quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

And that you may be truly sensible how excellent this Virtue of Humility is in itself, how valuable in the Eyes of God, and, consequently, how desirable it is, I shall only observe, That as there is no Sin, or Vice, which God has shewn so great a Detestation and Abhorrence of, none he has so signally and severely punished as Pride, so there is no Grace, or Virtue, so highly honoured with the divine Love and Favour, none rewarded with so extraordinary Blessings as Humility. *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

^a Rom. xii. 10.

It

It is an Observation of S. *Chrysostom*, That that very Hand which the humble S. *John Baptist* thought not worthy to unloose the Shoe of our blessed Saviour's Feet, that Hand our Lord thought worthy to baptize his sacred Head.

The highest Honour, which was ever done to any meer Creature, was done out of Regard to the lowest Humility ; the Son of God had such Regard to the Lowliness of the blessed Virgin, that he did her the Honour to choose her for the Mother of his holy Humanity.

And the same Disposition must be in every Soul, before Christ can be formed in it.

Let us therefore earnestly and incessantly beg of God, the Author and Giver of every good, and every perfect Gift, that he would give us true Humility, that he would empty our Souls of all Things, and especially of themselves; and that he would fill them with himself, for himself; to whom alone be all Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*





SERMON XVIII.



PSAL. LXVIII. 18.

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led Captivity Captive: Thou hast received Gifts for Men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.



THESE Words of the holy Psalmist are addressed to the Son of God and Saviour of Mankind^a. And they contain in Epitome, and in Little, the whole OEconomy, the Means and the End of Man's Redemption by Jesus Christ, and that in these Three following Particulars, which I shall make the Heads of the ensuing Discourse.

^a *Vid.* Eph. iv. 8, 9, 10.

I. They contain a prophetic Description of our blessed Lord's Resurrection from the Dead, Ascension into Heaven, and Exaltation at the right Hand of God; which Things do necessarily suppose his Incarnation, Life, and Death. *Thou hast ascended on high*, says the holy Psalmist, in prophetic Rapture.

II. A Recital of the blessed Fruits and Effects of our Lord's Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Session at God's right Hand: Thou hast led Captivity Captive: Thou hast received Gifts for Men; yea, even for the rebellious.

III. A Declaration of the Design and End of all this, *viz.* That the Lord God might dwell among, or in them. The End of our Redemption.

I. Then, we have, in these Words, a prophetic Description of our blessed Saviour's Resurrection from the Dead, Ascension into Heaven, and Exaltation at the right Hand of God, in the Expression of, *Thou hast ascended on high*, which does necessarily suppose and imply his Descent first, *viz.* His Incarnation, Life, Passion and Death. And in this *S. Paul* is our Guide, who expressly says, That the Ascent spoken of, in this Passage of my Text, necessarily supposes a Descent first, saying, *Ephes. iv. 8, 9. Wherefore, he saith, when he ascended up on high,*
he

he led Captivity Captive, and gave Gifts unto Men. Now (says the Apostle) that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower Parts of the Earth? And then he goes on to shew that both the Ascent and Descent belong to one and the same Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, saying, V. 10. He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all Heavens.

Our blessed Lord's Descent, or Humiliation, contains Three Steps, or Degrees; the First is his Incarnation, when God became Man, and came down from Heaven, to dwell upon Earth. This was a great and wonderful Descent, that the immortal^a and incorruptible^b God should take upon him, and clothe himself with Mortality and Corruption: That the pure^c, and holy^d, and blessed^e God should come down from the bright and chearful Regions of eternal Purity and Bliss, into this Sink of Sin, this dark and gloomy Vale of Tears and Misery. The Second Step of his Humiliation and Descent was his Way of Life, a Life of Poverty, Contempt and Sufferings, which was a much lower Degree of Abasement than the former.

For, tho' the Son of God would certainly have stooped below his essential Majesty, in becoming Man, had he appeared even in the highest and most exalted Condition of human Nature; yet the Descent would not have been quite so low, had he appeared in Circumstances of earthly

^a 1 Tim. i. 17. ^b Rom. i. 23. ^c Hab. i. 13. ^d Lev. ii. 8. ^e 1 Tim i. 2.

Grandeur and Glory, and been received and treated in a Manner suitable to the Dignity of his Person: But that the Lord of all should become the Servant of all; that the Giver of all Things should possess Nothing; that he, to whom all Honour and Glory do of Right belong, should meet with Contempt, Reproach, and Scorn, to the last and most outrageous Degree; that God most high, when he vouchsafed to become Man, should not be treated with the common Respect due to human Nature; but be looked upon, and treated as a Worm, and no Man; a Reproach of Men, and despised of the People, as the holy Psalmist, in a Figure, mournfully complains for him, in complaining for himself. *Psal. xxii. 6.* and goes on, *v. 7. All they that see me laugh me to Scorn, they shoot out their Lips, and shake their Heads:* That he who is the Happiness of the Blessed, the Joy and Delight, nay, the very Heaven of Heaven itself, essential Happiness, in whose Presence there is Fulness of Joy, and at whose right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore, when he came down from Heaven to Earth, should lead a Life, like his seamless Coat, all of a Piece, and all one continued Tissue of Sufferings and Sorrow, from the Manger to the Cross. This, I say, is a much lower Step of Humiliation and Descent, than the Incarnation.

The Third, and last, and lowest Degree of his Descent was his Death, when he descended, as the Apostle expresses it, into the lower Parts of the Earth.

That the most Holy should be numbered amongst the Transgressors, and be condemned as a Criminal; that the Lord of Life and Glory should suffer a shameful Death; this compleated and finished the Descent indeed. Lower than this it was impossible to go. These are the Steps of our blessed Saviour's Humiliation and Descent: Let us now see the Steps of his Ascension and Exaltation.

1. The *First* of which was his Resurrection from the Dead; by which he triumphed gloriously over the Power and Malice of Men and Devils; by which the God of Truth bare Witness to the Truth of his Doctrine, and the Innocency of his Person.

2. The *Second* Step was his triumphant Ascension, in Body and Soul, from Earth to Heaven, to answer his Descent from Heaven to Earth.

3. The highest Step and Degree of his Ascension is, his Exaltation to, and Session at the right Hand of God; his being seated in the Throne of the Kingdom, and invested with, and possessed of the highest Glory, Majesty, and Felicity, to answer and make Amends for the Meanness of his Appearance, and the undeserved Contempt and Sufferings he met with upon Earth: Which I hope to make more fully appear under the Second Head, to which it naturally leads me.

II. I come therefore to consider the Second Particular contained in the Words of my Text; and that is a Recital of the blessed Fruits and Effects of our Lord's Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Session

at God's right Hand in Glory, in these Words: *Thou hast led Captivity Captive, and received Gifts for Men; yea, even for the rebellious.*

And tho' the Effects here mentioned do precisely respect Nothing but our Lord's Ascension; yet since his Ascension does, in this Place, as I observed from the Testimony of *S. Paul*, necessarily suppose and infer his Descent first; and since I have, in the foregoing Article, taken Notice of the several Steps of our Lord's Descent, as well as of his Ascension, I shall, in this Head, consider the blessed Effects and Fruits of both. And here I shall endeavour to shew,

1. What the Effects and Fruits of our blessed Saviour's Humiliation and Exaltation were, with Regard to himself.

2. What they were, and are, with Regard to Mankind.

Among which, I must necessarily take Notice of those which are specified in the Text.

1. I shall endeavour to shew what the Effects of our blessed Saviour's Humiliation and Descent, and of his Ascension and Exaltation, were, with Regard to himself.

First, then, the Fruits and Effects of our blessed Lord's Humiliation and Descent, of his Incarnation, Life, Sufferings, and Death, were, with Regard to himself, the meriting and purchasing to himself, as Man, to be Head and King of God's Church, and Lord of all Creatures. And,

The Effect of his Exaltation, of his Resurrection, Ascension, and Sitting on the right Hand of God, was the being actually invested with

this Sovereignty, and the being put in actual Possession of this glorious Kingdom. That the Fruits of our blessed Lord's Incarnation, Death and Passion, were the meriting and purchasing, for his human Nature, the Dominion and Sovereignty over all Creatures, over Angels, Men, and Devils, and over all the Works of God; and especially, to be King and supreme Head of God's Church, whether visible or invisible, whether on Earth, or in Heaven, Angels, or Men: This, I say, is plainly and evidently declared in holy Scripture. *S. Paul* says, *Rom. xiv. 9.* That to this End, *Christ both died, and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the Dead and Living.* And, *Acts xx. 28.* he says, That our Lord purchased the Church with his own Blood. And he expressly asserts, in another Place, That our Lord's great Humiliation was the precise Reason of his great Exaltation. That because *being God, he became Man, and being Man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross:* That therefore *God highly exalted him, and hath given him a Name, which is above every Name: That at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and Things under the Earth. i. e.* That he should have an absolute and supreme Power and Dominion over Angels, Men, and Devils; and that every Tongue should confess, that *Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* *Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.* And in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the same Apostle says, That our Lord, who in his Incarnation

was

was made a little lower than the Angels, was, for his suffering of Death, crowned with Glory and Honour, was set over all the Works of God, and had all Things put in Subjection under his Feet; that is, put far below him, and under his Power. *Heb. ii. 7, 8, 9.* And to name no more in that most solemn and august Vision of *S. John* in the *Revelation*, the Death of the Lamb is mentioned as the Means whereby he merited his great Glory, and acquired the Honour of being worthy to be let into the secret Counsels of the Divinity. *Rev. v. 9.* And they sang a new Song, saying, *Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the Seals thereof, for thou wast slain.* And *V. 11, 12.* And I beheld, and heard the Voice of many Angels round about the Throne, and the Beasts and the Elders, and the Number of them was Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand, and Thousands of Thousands, saying, with a loud Voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing.*

These were the Fruits of our blessed Saviour's Humiliation and Descent.

I come now to speak of the Effect and Consequence of our Lord's Ascension and Exaltation, with Regard to himself; and that was the being actually invested with this Sovereignty, and put into actual Possession of this glorious Kingdom.

Our blessed Lord, after his Resurrection from the Dead, Ascension into Heaven, and upon his Exaltation to, and Sitting on the right Hand of

God, was admitted, and, as it were, seated in the Throne of God, was made and constituted, even as to his human Nature, Lord and Possessor of Heaven and Earth, was crowned and invested with a Glory, Majesty and Power, infinitely superior to that of the highest and sublimest Spirits and Intelligences of the celestial Hierarchies; so that the human Nature, in our blessed Saviour, is advanced and exalted above Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim, and is, in Dignity, immediately next to the pure Deity itself: Nay, in some Sense, we may venture to say, That as in the Incarnation, God became Man, so after the Ascension, when, being clothed with Majesty and Honour, he more fully resembled the Divinity, in the Exaltation of our blessed Saviour, Man became God. But these Things are affirmed, by Vertue of the personal Union of the human Nature with the divine; not by Conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, nor by the Change of the human Nature into God; nor by Confusion of Natures and Substances, but by Unity of Person. Thus the Blessed in Heaven are represented as paying the same Honour to the pure Deity, and to the deified Humanity. *Rev. v. 13. Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

This Supremency of Glory and Sovereignty the Scripture, in several Places, describes to us,
and

and speaks of, as the Consequence of our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension.

S. Paul tells us, Heb. i. 3. *That after the Son of God had, by himself, purged our Sins, that is, after his Death, Resurrection and Ascension, he sat down on the right Hand of the Majesty on high.* Thus our Lord himself assures his Disciples, after his Resurrection, that he was constituted *Lord of all.* Matth. xxviii. 18. *And Jesus came and spake unto his Disciples, saying, All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth.* Thus Ephes. i. 20, 21, 22. S. Paul says, that *when God had raised Christ from the Dead, he set him at his own right Hand in the heavenly Places, far above all Principalities and Power, and Might and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all Things under his Feet, and gave him to be the Head over all Things to the Church.* And S. Peter, mentioning the Resurrection of Christ, says, immediately after, *Who is gone into Heaven, and is at the right Hand of God, Angels, and Authorities and Powers, being made subject unto him.* 1 Pet. iii. 22.

The single Effect of our Lord's Exaltation mentioned in the Text, *viz.* That *he led Captivity Captive*, naturally leads to all this. The Leading of Captives, implies Victory and Triumph, and alludes to the triumphant Entry of a mighty Conqueror, who, having subdued, and been victorious over all the Enemies that opposed his Reign, leads them Captive after him, as Monuments and Trophies of his Power, to adorn the

Solemnity of the Procession, when he goes up to the capital City, to take Possession of his Kingdom.

The Expression of, *Leading Captivity Captive*, may signify either the great Number, or the great Power of the Captives; as if he had said, *Lord, in the Day of thy Exaltation, when thou shalt ascend to thy Throne, thou wilt adorn thy Triumph and Entry into thy Kingdom in Heaven, with a Captivity of thine Enemies equal to the Greatness of thy Power*; that is, the greatest that ever was, and that not only, with Regard to the Number and Multitude of them, but to their great Power. *Thou wilt lead Captivity Captive*, those which used to hold all others Captive, Sin, and Death, and him that has the Power of Death, the Devil and his Angels, and all those that were captivated by them: *Thou wilt lead Captivity itself Captive*.

And, as mighty Princes, upon the Day of their Inauguration and Coronation, usually shew large Tokens of their Magnificence and Grandeur, by the great Favour and Honour they then confer upon their Subjects: So our blessed Saviour, at his Ascension, not only *led Captivity Captive*, but *received Gifts for, and gave Gifts unto Men*: Which naturally leads us to consider,

2. What the Effects and Fruits of our blessed Saviour's Humiliation and Exaltation were, and are, with Regard to Men.

And here we shall find that the Fruit and Effect of our Lord's Humiliation and Descent

was

was the doing, and suffering, and meriting, for Man, all that was necessary for his Salvation. And,

That the Fruit and Effect of his Ascension and Exaltation was the being actually invested with sufficient Power, to give and communicate to Man what he had merited for him.

First, The Fruit and Effect of our blessed Saviour's Humiliation and Descent was the doing, and suffering, and meriting, for Man, all that was necessary for his Salvation: Which will evidently appear, when I have shewn what were the Necessities of fallen Man, and how the Life, Passion and Death of our Lord, do answer and supply them all.

Now the chief Things which fallen Man stood in Need of, for his Recovery, were these Three.

(1.) Attonement and Reconciliation with God, Pardon for the Guilt and Demerit of Sin, and being put into a State of Favour and Acceptance with God, and into a Capacity of obtaining Heaven and eternal Life.

(2.) A perfect Knowledge of the Path of Life, and the Way of Salvation. And,

(3.) Grace and Strength to walk in it, and to pursue it to the End. And, these are all fully answered by our Lord's Incarnation and Life, Passion and Death.

(1.) Our blessed Saviour, by the Offering of himself upon the Cross, made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the whole World. And, by Vertue of that, our Sins are forgiven, God is perfectly

recon-

reconciled to Man, and Man re-instated in the Favour of God, and put into a State and Capacity of Salvation. *We are no longer looked upon as Enemies, but are accepted, thro' the Beloved, in whom we have Redemption, thro' his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins.* Eph. i. 6, 7. And Heb. v. 9. S. Paul says of Christ, *That being made perfect by Sufferings, and by the Consummation and Finishing of them by his Death on the Cross, he became the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.* i. e. By his infinitely meritorious Death and Passion, he purchased and merited eternal Salvation, and all the Means necessary to it, for all Men, and will, one Time, actually bestow it upon those, who, by Obedience to his Doctrine, and Conformity to his Example, are qualified and disposed to receive it.

(2.) Our Lord fully answered the Second Want, by shewing to Men the Path of Life, and teaching them the Way of Salvation.

And this he did by his most holy Doctrine, and most heavenly Life: And that which is most eminently remarkable in our blessed Saviour's Doctrine and Life, that which is the Sum and Substance, and main End of them is, the constant and perpetual renouncing and denying, mortifying and dying to our own Will, that we may live to the Will of God in all Things. This is the *Strait Gate* and *Narrow Way* that leads to Life, which, our Saviour tells us, all, without Exception, must enter into, and walk in, who would arrive at the Kingdom of Heaven: And to make it plain to us, and to assure

us of it, this Way he chose for himself, and walked in, all the Days of his Life. This is the Way, and the only Way to Salvation.

For, it is plain, that the Way to our Recovery must be the direct Contrary to that by which we fell. Now as Man sinned at first, and does sin still, by following his own Will, in Opposition to the Will of God; so, of Necessity, to be restored, he must follow the Will of God, in Opposition to his own Will. Now it is impossible to bring about this Death and Destruction of our own Will, but by perpetually contradicting and mortifying it. For, the Way, effectually to destroy any Thing, is to refuse it every Thing that is agreeable to it, and that tends to nourish, and to keep it alive; and to give it those Things to which it has an Aversion, and which, by their Contrariety to its Nature, tend to destroy it. And there being Nothing which our own corrupt Self-will desires so much as Pleasure, Abundance, and Esteem, which are its Food, and Nourishment, and very Life; and Nothing it has such an Aversion to as Poverty, Reproach, Contempt, and Suffering, which are its Poison and its Death: Therefore the Captain of our Salvation overcame and destroyed the Body of Sin, in himself, by this Method, by a Life of Poverty, Contempt and Sufferings, and by a most painful and ignominious Death; and has proposed himself as the Model, Pattern, and Example, which all must follow, that come to God by him. Thus our Lord tells us, *he sought not his own Will, but the Will of the Father which sent him.*

John

John v. 30. And he says expressly, *John vi. 38. I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own Will, but the Will of him that sent me.* He charged and loaded himself with the Miseries and Infirmities of our mortal Nature, and was, in all Points, tempted as we are, yet without Sin; because he always subdued and overcame the Corruption of our Nature, in all Things, never doing the Will of Nature, or of Man, but the Will of God. And *S. Paul* assigns the Sufferings of Christ, as the Means whereby he arrived at such a perfect Submission, and Conformity of his own Will, to the Will of God; nay, and intimates the Necessity, at least, the Conveniency of those Means towards that End, saying, *Heb. v. 8. Tho' he were a Son, yet learned he Obedience, by the Things which he suffered.* *q. d.* Tho' our blessed Lord was the Son of God, yet when he became Man, and took upon him our corrupted and fallen Nature, in Order to get the perfect Mastery over it, and to render it perfectly submissive and obedient to the Will of God, he chose to be trained up in the School of Sufferings.

And certainly, if this were convenient for him, it is absolutely necessary for us: And hence it is, no doubt, that the same Apostle says, *Heb. ii. 10. that it became him for whom are all Things, and by whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect thro' Sufferings.* *i. e.* It became God, the Creator of all Things, and Father of Men, in the Redemption and Recovery of lost Mankind, to bring the

Captain

Captain and Leader the same Way by which his Soldiers and Followers were to be brought to Glory, that is, by Sufferings. And, accordingly, our blessed Lord proposes himself, in this Respect, as a Pattern for all to follow, without Exception, that would be his Disciples. Luke ix. 23. *And he said to them all, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow me. i. e.* If any Man will be my Disciple, and learn of me, and follow me, in the Way that leads to everlasting Life, let him, as I do, deny himself; let him renounce and deny Self-will, Self-love, Self-esteem, Self-seeking, in all Things, without Exception or Reserve; and *let him take up his Cross daily*; let him freely and chearfully submit to, and with Patience, Contentedness, and good Courage, bear all the Sufferings and Afflictions which the infinitely wise Providence of God shall send him, from Day to Day, and from Moment to Moment, as the Will of God. And thus let him follow me. *For, whosoever will save his Life, shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his Life, for my Sake, shall find it.*

But lest the Narrowness, and Difficulty of this Way of the Cross, should discourage Men from entering into it, and pursuing it to the End: Our blessed Saviour has not only shewed it to us, and walked in it before us; but,

(3.) He has merited and obtained, for us, Grace and Strength sufficient to enable us to follow him in it. He has merited, for us, that Grace of God's holy Spirit, who is the Power, and

and Might, and Omnipotence of God; and who, if we sincerely give up our selves to him, and pour out our Hearts before him, in humble, constant, and fervent Prayer, will be our Strength and our Life, and will work powerfully in us, both to will and to do.

These are the Fruits, with Regard to Men, of our Lord's Humiliation and Descent, of his Incarnation, Life, Passion, and Death.

Let us now see what is the Fruit of his Exaltation, of his Resurrection, Ascension, and Session at the right Hand of God: And this, I said, was the being actually invested with sufficient Power, to give and communicate to Men what he had merited for them. *When he ascended up on high, he received Gifts for Men, and, as S. Paul says, gave Gifts unto all Men.*

The Scripture tells us, that our Lord is gone into Heaven, to prepare a Place for all those that shall have followed his Steps on Earth; *that where he is, there they may be also: That he appears at the right Hand of God for us; that he ever lives to make Intercession for us; and that he is able to save, to the Uttermost, all that come unto God by him.* And by Vertue of this All-powerful Intercession, and in Consequence of his being enthroned in the Kingdom of Heaven, he sent down the holy Spirit upon his Church, not many Days after his Ascension, to be a Witness of his Majesty and Glory; *who, on the Feast of Pentecost, came down in a most wonderful and miraculous Manner from Heaven, with a sudden great Sound, as it had been a mighty Wind, in the*
Like-

Likeness of fiery Tongues, lighting upon the Apostles, to teach them, and to lead them to all Truth, giving them both the Gifts of divers Languages, and also Boldness, with fervent Zeal, to preach the Gospel to all Nations.

This Gift of the holy Ghost was not, barely, for the first planting Christianity in the World; but it was a Gift that was to continue with the Church for ever. And in this Gift he gave us all Things: For, it is the holy Spirit, that, by his holy Operation upon our Spirits, cleanses, purifies and sanctifies our Hearts, supports, comforts, and strengthens our Souls. By this Gift which our Lord received, even for his Enemies, as well as for his Friends, *Sinners are brought to Conversion and Repentance, the Weak are strengthened, and the Strong established.* And tho' he does no longer appear in such a wonderful Manner, as when he was at first given: Yet the Effects of his powerful Presence and Operation, in the Soul, are as truly miraculous, as any external Wonders that were ever wrought.

For, the raising the Soul, in this fallen State, above itself, and sustaining and keeping it up in that Condition; the giving Force and Strength to it, to live in a perpetual Mortification and Denial of itself, to make it rejoyce in Tribulation and Afflictions, and to make it content, and even happy, in the sharpest Sufferings, which infinite Wisdom may appoint it to go through, in Order to its Purification: These Things, I say, are as miraculous and supernatural, to the Full, as to make the liquid Waters to stand upon

upon an Heap, or to suspend the violent Activity of Fire, and make it forget its Burning: As God promised he would do for his Servants, *Isai. xliii. 2. When thou passest thro' the Waters, I will be with thee, and thro' the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee: When thou walkest thro' the Fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the Flame kindle upon thee.*

III. I come now to speak to the Third Particular contained in the Text, *viz.* The End and Design of our Lord's Descent and Ascension, and of the Redemption of Mankind, expressed in these Words, *That the Lord God might dwell among, or in them.*

By the Expression of *God's dwelling in us*, is signified eternal Happiness and Glory. The Phrase of *dwelling* manifestly alludes to an House, or Temple. Now we are told frequently, in holy Scripture, that our Souls are Temples, living Temples of the living God, in which God delights to dwell, and manifest himself. *1 Cor. iii. 16. Know ye not*, says the Apostle, *that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* He speaks of it, as one of the first Principles of Christian Knowledge.

Now God's dwelling, in the Temple of our Souls, implies these Three Things.

1. His Love to them, and Delight in them.
2. His Presence in them, manifesting himself, and communicating himself to them, and filling them with himself.
3. The Constancy and Continuance of his Presence and Residence.

1. *First,*

1. *First*, God's dwelling in the Temple of our Souls signifies his Love to them, and Delight in them.

No one ever willingly chooses a Place, for his Habitation and Residence, which he hates and abhors, but such as he likes and loves. Now God has said, that *his Delights are to be with the Children of Men*. Prov. viii. 31. *Here will I dwell; for I have a Delight therein; I have loved thee with an everlasting Love*. Jer. xxxi. 3. As Man is the Image of the beloved Son of God, who is the essential Image of his Father; so God loves Man with the same Love that he bears towards his own Image, which is the same that he bears towards himself: And of this he has given evident Proof and Demonstration; for, *God so loved the World, that he spared not his only begotten Son, but gave him up for us all*.

When Man had, by his Sin, defaced the Image of God in his Soul, had defiled and profaned the Temple of God, and driven him away from his Habitation, God sent his Son, who was the Maker, to be the Redeemer of Man: That God, in whose Image he was made, to repair and restore the defaced Image of himself, in Righteousness and true Holiness, and to cleanse and purify, and sanctify our Souls, and to prepare and fit them again for an Habitation of God, thro' the Spirit.

2. God's dwelling in the Soul of Man signifies his Presence in it, his manifesting and communicating himself to it, and filling it with himself.

The Presence of God, in the Soul, is discovered, by the Operation of God upon it, by the manifesting and communicating himself to it; by shewing to its Understanding, and causing it clearly to see the charming and ravishing Beauties, Glories, Excellencies and Perfections of the divine Nature; at which Sight the Soul is transported and overwhelmed with Rapture, Extasy, and Delight. It is a common Thing, with Divines, to describe eternal Happiness, by the beatifick Vision and Sight of God, and that it is properly so called, that the Sight of God is truly beatifying, causing infinite and unspeakable Delight and Pleasure to the Soul; the Son of God himself assures us, saying, John xvii. 3. *This is Life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*: For, he, that sees and knows the Father, sees and knows the Son also.

But God, dwelling in the Soul, does not only manifest and discover himself to it; but also communicates himself, and all his Glories and Perfections to the Soul, in so far, as the Capacity and Condition of a Creature is able to receive and possess them. He does not make a Show and Parade of his immense Riches and Treasures, for Pomp and Ostentation, but he actually gives and communicates, as much of them to the Soul, as it can receive and contain. He fills it with himself, as full as it can hold. He glorifies it with his own Glory, and makes it happy with his own Happiness. He fills it with the Light, Splendor and Glory of his

his Son, and with the Love, Joy and Delight of the holy Ghost.

But, besides this Manner of God's dwelling in the Soul, which constitutes the Happiness of the World to come, there is another Manner of God's dwelling in the Soul, implied in the Words of the Text, and this is *the Fulness of Grace* here, in Order to *the Fulness of Glory* hereafter; for our Lord has made us this Promise, saying, John xiv. 21. *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest my self unto him.* And v. 23. *If a Man love me, he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him.* And this, tho' infinitely short of the Glory that shall be revealed hereafter, is yet a most glorious and blessed Dispensation: For, tho' God manifests his Presence in our Souls, during this Life, as he did in *Solomon's Temple* of Old, in a Cloud, tho' he *dwells now in our Hearts by Faith*, and we *only see thro' a Glass darkly*, and the highest Manifestations of himself, in this mortal State, are but like the arising of the Day-star in our Hearts, or like the Dawning of the Day, in Comparison of the bright and glorious Day of Eternity; yet the Knowledge of himself, which God has pleased to communicate to pure and prepared Souls, and the Love which he sheds abroad, in their Hearts, even in this World, may well be called the supreme Happiness of Life; for it fills them with *a'll Joy and Peace in believing*, with

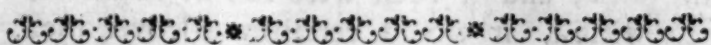
inconceivable Peace and ineffable Joy; with the Peace of God which passeth all Understanding, and with a Joy which subsists in the Midst of Sorrow, and causes them to rejoyce in the Midst of Sufferings and Torments, a Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

3. And *Lastly*, God's Dwelling in our Souls signifies the Constancy and Continuance of his Presence. Dwelling is not a short and transient View and Visit, but a constant and continual Residence, so long as the Place continues agreeable, and the Person continues to like it. Now God being immutable, and eternal, and loving us with an everlasting Love, the Dwelling of God, in a Soul, must signify the Eternity of that Happiness which God communicates to it, by residing in it, and manifesting himself to it. Which God, of his infinite Mercy, grant us, thro' the Merits and Intercession of his adorable Son, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer.





SERMON XIX.



LUKE XI. 11, 12, 13.

If a Son ask Bread of any of you that is a Father, will he give him a Stone? Or if he ask a Fish, will he, for a Fish, give him a Serpent?

Or if he ask an Egg, will he offer him a Scorpion?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts to your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?



AS in our Bodies, it is a melancholy Sign of their approaching Death, when they have lost all Relish of, and Appetite to those Things which are necessary to support their Life: So it is a desperate Symptom of the sickly, languishing, and dying Condition

of our Souls, when we have no Sense of the Want, and no Desire of a Supply, of the Grace of God's holy Spirit, which is the Food and Nourishment of our Spirits. A dangerous State, and yet how common!

How few are there, that have a strong and vigorous spiritual Appetite!

For they, that *hunger and thirst after the Righteousness of God*, have a Promise of being *filled*; and if Men were full of Righteousness within, it would certainly discover itself, and appear outwardly; for, *out of the Abundance of the Heart*, Men both *speak and act*. Therefore from the universal Decay of the Spirit of Religion, we cannot but conclude the as universal Destitution of the Spirit of God.

Now as a wise and charitable Physician seeing and compassionating a miserable needy Wretch, perishing both for Want of Appetite and Food, in Order to retrieve him from the Jaws of Death, would first endeavour to recover his decayed Stomach, and after that, to put him into an easy and certain Method of getting Food and Nourishment to support his Life: So the most natural Method of reviving the drooping and decayed Spirit of Religion, and to *raise Men from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness*, is to endeavour to recover and raise their spiritual Appetite, and to excite in them strong and vigorous Desires after God's holy Spirit, the only Nourishment and Support of all spiritual Life; and then to shew them the ready and infallible Way of obtaining it.

This

This Method, then, the divine Physician and Saviour of our Souls has taken, in the Passage here before us, to rescue us from spiritual and eternal Death. He here compares our asking of our heavenly Father his holy Spirit, to a Child's asking of a Fish, or Bread, of his earthly Parent: That is, he compares the *Grace* and Influence of God's holy Spirit, to our *necessary Food*, that, by this Comparison, he might excite our spiritual Appetite, and raise in us strong and ardent Desires of this heavenly Manna, this Bread of Life, and Food of Angels. Then, having raised our Desires after this heavenly Gift, he shews us the ready Way to obtain it, *viz.* by presenting those Desires, and laying them before our heavenly Father, humbly and earnestly begging of him his holy Spirit. And, *Lastly*, to shew us, that it is not a more natural, than infallible Method of getting our spiritual Wants supplied, he assures us, that our heavenly Father is much more ready, to give his Grace and holy Spirit to his Children, that call upon him for their spiritual Food, than any earthly Parent can be, to fill the Belly of his hungry Child, that cries to him for Bread: Even as much more ready as the Power and Goodness of God is greater than that of Men.

This seems to be the End our blessed Lord pursued in this Passage, and this, consequently, ought to be the End of a Discourse upon it.

I. To raise and excite our spiritual Desires, by shewing the Necessity of the Influence and Operation of the holy Spirit upon our Souls.

II. To animate our Endeavours, by shewing the ready and infallible Method to obtain the inestimable Blessing.

I. *First*, then, in Order to raise and excite our spiritual Desires, I am to endeavour to shew the *Necessity* of the Influence and Operation of the holy Spirit upon our Souls.

Nothing can more clearly, or strongly, represent to our Minds the *Necessity* of the Grace of God's holy Spirit, than the Allusion our blessed Lord is pleased to make Use of in the Text; where he compares it to corporal Food: Which, undeniably, implies that *Grace* is to our Souls, what *Food* is to our Bodies; and that the one is as *necessary*, for the Life of the *Spirit*, as the other is, for the Life of the *Body*. And what is more *necessary*, than our *necessary Food*? And what do we stand, daily, more in Need of, than our daily Bread?

Now the divine Wisdom having thought fit, in many Places of Scripture, besides that of my Text, to represent the Grace of God, or the gracious Influences and Communications of the Spirit of God to the Spirits of Men, under the Similitude of Meat, and Drink, and corporal Food; I cannot but conclude, that it is the properest Way of conveying into, and impressing upon Mens Minds, a just Notion and lively Sense of its Nature and Necessity. And, therefore, I cannot think it an improper Way of pursuing the End and Design of this Discourse, to draw out the Metaphor into an Allegory, to form a Comparison, and shew you, more at large, the Resemblance and Conformity there

is between *spiritual* and *corporal* Food; between the *Grace of God* and our *daily Bread*. From whence, by the Blessing of God directing my Speech, and applying it to your Hearts, there may arise in you, from this *imperfect Draught*, a Desire of having a Recourse to, and possessing the *Original*; and, from this little Taste, a Desire of applying your selves to the Source, and satiating your selves at the Fountain Head: As the Relish of savoury Meat, and the Flavour of delicious Wine, are apt to whet our Appetite, and make us long for more.

I won't pretend to draw the Parallel out at Length, and pursue the Comparison thro' every minute Circumstance; but shall content my self with shewing a Conformity and Likeness between them, in some of the most general and principal Points, which yet will include most, if not all, the particular ones.

1. One great Property, or Effect of Food, is to communicate Strength and Vigour to our Bodies, to enable them to resist and overcome whatever would bereave us of Life, whether Enemies without, or Diseases within.

2. Another great Property, or Effect of Food, is to strengthen and invigorate all the animal Faculties, so that they perform all vital Functions and Actions, with Ease and Pleasure.

3. A *Third* great Property, or Effect of Food, is a perfect State of Health, and the Ease and Tranquillity, the Pleasure and Delight resulting from it, and flowing thro' the whole Body.

4. The *Fourth* and last great Property, or Effect of Food, which I shall mention, is, The

pre-

preserving and continuing of Life, by uniting, mixing, and incorporating its Spirit and Life with our vital Spirits, either by being transmuted and changed into their Nature, if it be weaker than they, or by changing their Nature into its own Qualities, if it be stronger than they.

And, from the Want of proper Food, and Nourishment, follow these contrary ill Effects.

Our Bodies become feeble and faint, and unable to resist any Opposition and Violence; our vital Faculties become weak and languid, and cannot perform their proper Offices, without great Difficulty and Pain; there's a general Confusion and Disorder, and, consequently, a general Restlessness and Uneasiness throughout the whole bodily Frame; and lastly, for Want of a proper Supply, the vital Spirits decay, and are exhausted; and the Lamp of Life, for Want of Oyl, goes out. From the Privation of the necessary Support of Life must follow inevitable Death.

Now, in all these Points, there is a most exact and lively Resemblance and Likeness between *spiritual* and *corporal* Food.

1. Then, One great Property, or Effect of spiritual Food, or the Grace of God's holy Spirit, is to infuse and communicate Power, Strength, and Vigour into our Spirits, to enable us to resist the Assaults, and stand the Shocks of our spiritual Enemies, and to surmount the Violence of our spiritual Diseases.

Our spiritual Enemies and Diseases are, the Devil without us, and our own corrupt Nature within us. Their Attacks upon us are the Suggestion

gestion of evil Thoughts by evil Spirits, the raising and conjuring up evil Objects in our Imaginations, and presenting them to our Understanding and Will, and solliciting *them* to approve of, and consent to them: And the Motions of our own in-bred Lusts and Passions, corrupt Affections, Desires and Inclinations, which, no doubt, are very much exalted, heightened and enflamed by the Power and Energy of evil Spirits, uniting their own impure Desires and Motions with ours: As a Fever is heightened by taking spirituous Liquors, and a Fire burns fiercer by the Addition of a greater to it.

These are the Diseases, these are the Enemies that war against the Soul, that labour to extinguish the Life of Grace, and to thrust it into the Darkeness of eternal Death.

Now the proper Effect of Grace, that is, of real Influences, from the Spirit of God to the Spirits of Men, is to communicate to them, to infuse into, and diffuse, thro' their Souls, a divine Power and Vigour, by which they are enabled to withstand and overcome their spiritual Enemies, in all their Attacks and Assaults upon them.

This is done by infusing, and pouring into our Hearts, the Three great theological and divine Graces of *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*, which are the vital Food of the vital *Powers* of the Soul, the Three ruling and governing Faculties of our Spirit, the *Understanding*, *Memory* and *Will*; filling the *Understanding* with the *divine Light of Faith*, or the true Knowledge of God, the *Will* with *Charity*, or the Love of God, and
the

the *Memory* with *Hope*, or the blessed Expectation of enjoying God, and the good Things he has prepared for, and promised to those that love him; by inspiring pure, holy, and heavenly Motions, Desires and Inclinations; and by enduing the Soul with a divine and invincible Force and Firmness, by his omnipotent Power.

So that when an evil Thought is raised in the Imagination, and presented to the Understanding and Will, for their Approbation and Choice, it finds them engaged before-hand, prepossessed, and filled with Something so much better than it, that its Offers are of no Weight, they are easily despised and rejected with Scorn.

Thus if the Tempter sets upon a Man, and presents to his Mind an evil Object, which, he suggests, will procure him worldly Honour, Profit, or sensual Pleasure; the *Understanding* enlightened by the Light of *divine Faith*, immediately, sees thro' the Disguise, and discovers the Cheat, spies the Hook under the Bait, and sees the *real* Evil and Misery lying hid under the *false* and *apparent* Good: And, being filled with the Knowledge of God, and intimately penetrated with a Sense of his Excellency, values and esteems him, and him only, and Nothing in Comparison of him. The *Will*, being filled with *Charity*, or the Love of God, relishes, desires, loves Nothing but God, the Will, the Pleasure, the Glory of God. The *Memory*, being full of *Hope*, delights in Nothing but the Thoughts of God, and the pleasing Expectations of, one Day, seeing and enjoying God, of seeing him as he is, and being like him.

So that the Man is able to say to any Temptation whatsoever, that presents itself, that he has Something much better, and more agreeable, to employ his Thoughts upon; that there is Something infinitely more excellent, and which he prefers and loves infinitely before it, and all it can offer, or give him; that to him there is no *Pleasure* comparable to the Pleasure of *pleasing God*, no *Honour* so great, as that of *serving God*, no *Riches* upon Earth to be laid in the Balance with the *Kingdom of Heaven*.

The Temptation, you see, does not bid high enough; and unless there could be Something offered more excellent and desirable than God, and a glorious Eternity, the Attempt is fruitless and vain. It is like offering a Banker a Piece of Copper, for a large Heap of Gold, or tempting a Jeweller with a Glass Bawble, to part with a Diamond.

Thus the holy Spirit conveys and communicates Strength and Vigour into our Spirits, and enables us to withstand the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, by infusing, or pouring into our Hearts and Souls, the divine Graces of Faith, Hope and Charity, and by moving and exciting us to, and assisting us in, the actual Use and Exercise of them, upon all necessary Occasions.

This is the Strength which, the holy Scripture says, we must be endued with, to resist and overcome our spiritual Enemies. S. *John* says, 1 Ep. v. 4. *This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.* And S. *Paul* tells us, that we must be *armed with the Breast-plate*

plate of Faith and Love, and for an Helmet with the Hope of Salvation, 1 Thess. v. 8. And the same Apostle, in another Place, speaking of our spiritual Enemies, shews us the absolute Necessity of the same defensive Armour, and tells, withal, from whom alone we can receive it. Ephes. vi. 11, 12. Finally, my Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might. Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil, for we wrestle not. i. e. not only against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against whom, above all Things, says he, take the Shield of Faith, and the Helmet of Salvation, v. 16. Thus Ephes. iii. 16. the Apostle prays for his Flock, that God would grant them, according to the Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened with Might, by his Spirit, in the inner Man.

And thus also, with Regard to the Diseases of our Souls, which are our Vices, Lusts, Passions, our corrupt and irregular Appetites and Inclinations, we are taught, in Scripture, that the only Way to destroy them, which otherwise would destroy us, is to subdue and overcome them, by resisting and denying them, by mortifying and crucifying them: And that *this* is *only* to be done *by the Power of the holy Spirit* residing and inhabiting in us, and communicating himself, and his divine Power to us. Gal. v. 24. *They that are Christ's, [that have the Spirit of Christ, that are governed and led by the Spirit] have*
cruc.

crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts. And Rom. viii. 2. the Apostle assures us, that it is only *the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, that can set us free from the Law of Sin and Death.* The Law of the Spirit of Life. *i. e.* The Dictates, Commands, holy Motions and Inspirations of the Spirit of God, the Life-giving Spirit, the Author and Giver of Life, both natural and spiritual; it is the Power of this Spirit of Life, that alone can set us free from the Law of Sin and Death, *i. e.* hinder us from obeying the Motions and Dictates of our sinful Inclinations, Appetites, and Passions, and so set us free from the Dominion and Tyranny of, and from Subjection and Slavery to, Sin and Death. And, in the 13th Verse, he assures us, that *if we live after the Flesh, we shall die; but that if, through the Spirit, we do mortify the Deeds of the Body, we shall live.*

Thus is the Grace of God, or real Emanations and Communications of Power and Strength, from the Spirit of Life to our Spirits, the Food and Nourishment of our Souls; whereby Strength and Vigour are communicated to them, to resist and overcome, either our spiritual Enemies from without, or the spiritual Diseases within us.

And, for Want of this invigorating Food, our Souls become feeble and languishing, unable to stand the least Shock of an Assault; and we are no more able to resist and overcome a Temptation, than a Soldier, starved with Hunger, is to conquer his Enemy in full Strength. We fall

an

an easy Prey to our Enemies, our Lusts and Passions, and vicious Inclinations domineer and tyrannize over us, the Devil leads us Captive at his Will, the Life of Grace is extinguished, and we enter into the Horrors of the Shadow of Death eternal.

2. Another great Property and Effect of spiritual Food is, to strengthen and invigorate all the spiritual Faculties, so that they discharge their vital Offices and Functions, and perform their Actions, with Ease and Pleasure.

The Three great and vital Faculties of our Souls, or Spirits, are, as I observed above, the Understanding, Memory and Will, and the vital Actions and Functions of these Faculties are the Exercise of the Three great theological Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity; which are the great ruling and governing Principles of the spiritual Life. For, from one, or other of these, do all particular Virtues and Duties whatsoever, either towards God, or Man, proceed and flow; and, to one, or other of these, they are reducible, as to their original Source and Fountain.

Now to a Man, that has great Degrees of Grace, that is *strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*, Nothing is more easy and delightful, than to exercise the aforesaid Graces, and all the Acts of Virtue and Piety which flow from them.

Nothing is more easy to one, whose *Faith* is not the Work of Man, but *the Gift of God*; not a speculative Notion of the *Head*, but a strong and lively Impression upon the *Heart*,
made

made by the powerful Hand of God himself: Nothing, I say, is more easy to a Man penetrated with so powerful a Sense and Apprehension of the infinitely transcendent Excellency of God, than to produce the Acts, and bring forth the Fruits of such a Faith. Nothing is more easy to such a one, than to value and esteem God only, and to neglect and despise all Things in Comparison of him, and that come in Competition with him. What is more natural than to *believe the God of Truth*, and to trust and rely upon almighty Goodness? How easy, how natural is it to give and resign up our selves, wholly and absolutely, to be directed and governed, to be ordered and disposed of, both in Soul and Body, in Time and Eternity, by infinite *Wisdom*, infinite *Power*, and infinite *Love*?

Again, with Regard to *Charity*, or the Love of God, Nothing is more easy, or delightful to a Soul, inspired with this divine Grace, than to exercise it, and bring forth the proper Fruits of it. When this celestial Flame is thoroughly kindled in our Breast, it cannot long be hid. It will ever be breaking out, and Nothing is more delightful to it than to give itself Vent. If the *Love of God be shed abroad in our Hearts, by the holy Ghost*^a, it will naturally shew itself in our Lives and Conversations, in our Words and Works.

It is an essential Property of Love, to desire and endeavour to please the Person beloved.

^a Rom. v. 5.

And to those that *truly love God*, Nothing is more *desirable* and delightful, than to *know* and to *do* the Will of God. From hence flows their Love of, and chearful and ready Obedience, to all his Commands. *Lord*, says the holy Psalmist, *what Love have I to thy Law, all the Day long is my Study in it*^a. And in another Place, *I love thy Commandments above Gold and precious Stones*. And again, *O how sweet are thy Words unto my Throat! Yea, sweeter than Honey unto my Mouth*. *I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed to keep thy righteous Judgments*. *I have applied my Heart to fulfil thy Statutes always, even unto the End*. *Job* says, *I have esteemed the Words of his Mouth, more than my necessary Food*. And our blessed Lord tells us, it was his *Meat to do the Will of God*. Another essential Property of Love is, to love all that resembles the Person beloved, and all that the Beloved loves.

Hence flows the fervent Charity, which they who truly love God, have for Men. Hence the ardent Desires and unwearied Endeavours to do them Good, both in Soul and Body, and that to such a Degree, as, if Need be, even to *lay down their Lives for the Brethren*: *For the Love of Christ constraineth them*, because they judge thus, that *if God so loved them, they ought also so to love one another*.

Another essential Property of Love is, to delight in the Presence and Conversation of the Person beloved. Hence flows the spiritual Plea-

^a Psal. cxix. *passim*.

sure that they who truly love God, take in coming into his Presence, and conversing with him in Prayer and Praises, both in publick and private, in contemplating, with Wonder and Delight, the Beauties and Perfections of the divine Nature, in devoutly reading and meditating upon his holy Word, and in the nearer Approaches to him, and more intimate Communion with him, in the most holy Sacrament. Hear what the Royal Psalmist says on this Subject: *Lord, says he, I have loved the Habitation of thy House^a. O how amiable are thy Dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts! My Soul hath a Desire and Longing to enter into the Courts of the Lord^b. Blessed is the Man whom thou chooshest and receivest unto thee. He shall dwell in thy Courts, and shall be satisfied with the Pleasures of thy House, even of thy holy Temple^c. My Soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with Marrow and Fatness, when my Mouth praiseth thee with joyful Lips^d.*

And to mention no more: As all Things are possible to him that believeth, so all Things are easy to him that loveth. The Yoke of Love is easy, and its Burden light, and the Commands of Love cannot be grievous. Those Things, which to others seem intolerable and impossible, to those that love are easy and delightful. Thus they that love the World, and the Things of the World, Riches, Honours, or sensual Pleasures, do such Things, in Order to obtain them with

^a Psal. xxvi. 8.

^b Psal lxxxiv. 1, 2.

^c Psal. lxxv. 4.

^d Psal. lxiii. 6.

Ease and Delight, as to those who love God, and not the World, would be most crucifying and tormenting. They take the greatest Pains with the greatest Pleasure, and part with what is most dear and valuable to them, without the least Hesitation and Reluctance, to get what they love; they think themselves happy in sacrificing their Ease and Repose, their Time, Labour, Strength, Health and Life, to the gratifying their Passions. Thus also, on the other Hand, they who are endued with the divine Grace of Charity, and do truly love God, do, for the Sake of God, perform such Things with Ease and Delight, as to worldly Men, to Flesh and Blood, are most grievous and intolerable. They mortify and deny their Appetites and Passions with greater Pleasure than others gratify them. They rejoyce more in suffering than worldly Men do in Pleasure, and embrace that Cross with Delight, which others shun and fly from with Horror. They account it the highest Honour, and greatest Happiness, gladly to offer up themselves, their Bodies, Souls, Spirits, all that they have and are, without Exception or Reserve, as a Sacrifice to God, that they may see him, and possess and enjoy him for ever.

Acts v. 41. We are told, that *the Apostles rejoyced that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for the Name of Christ.* S. Paul tells us, that he rejoyced in his Sufferings for the Churches Sake. *Col. i. 24.* And that he took Pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's Sake. *2 Cor. xii. 10.* And he tells us, that the first Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their Goods.

Goods. And S. James bids us count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Afflictions, James i. 2.

Lastly, As to the Exercise of the Grace of *Hope*, Nothing is more natural and easy, than for the Man whose Hope is in the Lord his God, to rely and depend upon God for Good. For, from Goodness itself Nothing but Good can come. How natural is it for the disconsolate and afflicted to have Recourse to, and rely upon the *Father of Mercies, and God of all Comfort and Consolation?* How natural in all Dangers, Necessity and Distress, to fly for *Defence to the most High,* and to trust for Protection and Safety under the *Shadow of the Almighty?* And as *Faith* is the Ground and Foundation of *Hope*, how natural is it for one that has a strong and lively Sense, and Impression upon his Spirit, of the infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God: How natural is it, I say, for such a Man to trust all his Concerns, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, in his Hands? Being fully convinced that Nothing can ever befall him by the Order or Permission of God, but it must be for his Good; and that, as certainly, as infinite Wisdom cannot be Folly, infinite Power cannot be Weakness, nor infinite Love be Hatred. Again, Nothing is more natural, and more delightful to Hope, than to have its Thoughts continually occupied and employed upon the Thing hoped for. And Nothing can be more pleasing and delightful to him whose *Hope is in the Lord his God,* and is full of Immortality, than to think upon God, to have God frequently in his Thoughts, to set God always before him, and constantly to re-

member him, whom, tho' present, he cannot see. Nothing is more delightful to such a Man, than frequently to entertain his Mind with the pleasing Expectations of the Coming of that blessed Day, when he shall see that God whom he now believes, and shall enjoy him whom he now hopes for, and shall obtain and possess that Purity, Happiness and Glory, he is now pursuing.

And, to one, whose Mind and Thoughts are thus continually employed and taken up, Nothing is more easy than to despise and reject all Offers and Temptations that would deprive and rob him of what his Heart and Hopes are set and fixed upon.

Thus the Exercise of these Three divine Graces, and of all the Duties and Virtues of a Christian Life which flow from, and depend upon, them, which are the vital Actions and Functions of the vital Faculties of our Spirits, is easy and natural to those who are *strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*, who are enlivened and invigorated by the spiritual Food and Nourishment of Grace, and Communications of God's holy Spirit.

These Virtues are the very Element they live in, and the Exercise of them is as easy and natural to them, as it is for Men, in Health and Strength, to breathe and walk.

But, for Want of this invigorating spiritual Food of God's Grace, it is, that our Souls become languid and weak; and that we find so much Trouble, Difficulty and Pain in the Exercise of Piety and Virtue. 'Tis for Want of the Grace of God, that we do so little for God,
and

and that the little we do costs us so much. Hence it is, that we practise the least Acts of Mortification and Self-denial, with greater Difficulty and Reluctancy, than others have done the greatest Austerities; and that we complain more of the lightest Afflictions, than others have done of Martyrdom and Crucifixion. Hence it is, that we have so quick a Relish for the World, and so little Sense of God; that Devotion and spiritual Exercises are so tasteless, so tedious and troublesome to us, that we have no Delight in approaching unto God, in coming into, and living in his Presence, in conversing with him, and speaking to him in Prayers and Praises. Hence it is, that our Love to Men, as well as to God, is so cold; that it is with the greatest Difficulty we can be persuaded to do any Thing for others; that we are so backward to do them Good, and so ready to do them Harm; that we would rather take their Lives from them, than lay down our own for them; and rather spoil them of their Goods, than part with our own to them. The weaker we are in Grace, the weaker we are in all Manner of Virtue. And 'tis as difficult to a Man that is spiritually weak, to practise the Virtues of Christianity, as it is for a Man that is weak and fainting, for Want of bodily Food, to walk, leap and vault, and to use strong Exercise and hard Labour. And, when a Man is in this State, there is but one Step between him and Death, spiritual and eternal Death.

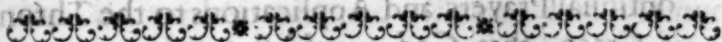
These are some of the excellent Effects of Grace, and the dismal Effects of the Want of

it. And by these, if we will but seriously beg of God to help us to apply them home to our Hearts, we may judge of our selves, and the State of Grace we are in, and see if we are not in that low and languid State, which we have so much Reason to be apprehensive and afraid of: And may be, thereby, quickened and animated earnestly to desire, and heartily to endeavour after greater Measures and Degrees of Grace, by most humble, fervent, constant and continual Prayers and Applications to the Throne of Grace, that *God would strengthen us with Might, by his holy Spirit, in the inner Man, that we may be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might.*





SERMON XX.



LUKE XI. 11, 12, 13.

If a Son ask Bread of any of you that is a Father, will he give him a Stone? Or if he ask a Fish, will he, for a Fish, give him a Serpent?

Or if he ask an Egg, will he offer him a Scorpion?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts to your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?



OUR blessed Saviour, in this Passage, compares our asking of our heavenly Father his holy Spirit, to a Child's asking of Fish, or Bread, of his earthly Parent: That is, He compares the Grace and Influence of God's holy Spirit, to our necessary Food,

Food, that, by this Comparison, he might excite our spiritual Appetite, and raise in us strong and ardent Desires after this heavenly Manna, and Bread of Life, which is as absolutely necessary to the spiritual Life, as bodily Food is to the Life of the Body.

Then, having raised our Desires after this heavenly Gift, he is pleased to shew us the ready Way to obtain it, *viz.* by presenting those Desires, and laying them before our heavenly Father, humbly and earnestly begging of him his holy Spirit. And lastly, to shew us that it is not a more natural, than infallible Method of getting our spiritual Wants supplied, he assures us, that our heavenly Father is much more ready to give his Grace and holy Spirit, to his Children that call upon him for their spiritual Food, than any earthly Parent can be to fill the Belly of his hungry Child that cries to him for Bread: Even as much more ready, as the Power and Goodness of God is greater than that of Men.

This seeming to be the End our blessed Lord pursued in this Passage, I thought it proper to be the Design of a Discourse upon it.

To this Purpose, therefore, I proposed to endeavour these Two Things.

- I. To raise and excite our spiritual Desires, by shewing the Necessity of the Influence and Operation of the holy Spirit upon our Souls.
- II. To animate our Endeavours, by shewing the ready and infallible Method of obtaining that inestimable Blessing.

I. First,

I. *First*, then, in Order to raise and excite our spiritual Desires, I proposed to endeavour to shew the *Necessity* of the Influence and Operation of the holy Spirit upon our Souls.

In Order to this I observed, that Nothing could more clearly, or strongly, represent to our Minds the *Necessity* of the Grace of God's holy Spirit, than the Allusion our blessed Lord is pleased to make Use of in the Text; where he compares it to corporal Food: Which, undeniably, implies, that *Grace* is to our Souls, what *Food* is to our Bodies; and that the one is as *necessary* for the Life of the *Spirit*, as the other is for the Life of the *Body*. And what is more *necessary* than our *necessary Food*? And what do we stand daily more in Need of than our daily Bread?

And having observed, that the divine Wisdom had thought fit, in many Places of Scripture, besides that of my Text, to represent the Grace of God, or the gracious Influences and Communications of the Spirit of God to the Spirits of Men, under the Similitude of Meat and Drink, and corporal Food: I concluded, it was one of the properest Ways of conveying into, and impressing upon Mens Minds, a just Notion and lively Sense of its Nature and Necessity. And, therefore, thought it not an improper Way of pursuing the End and Design of my Text, and this Discourse, to draw out the Metaphor into an Allegory, to form a Comparison, and shew you, more at large, the Resemblance and Conformity there is between *spiritual* and *corporal Food*; between the *Grace of God* and our *daily Bread*.

To which Purpose, I pitched upon Four of the principal Properties, or Effects of Food, as Instances of this Likeness and Resemblance.

1. One great Property of Food is, to communicate Strength and Vigour to our Bodies, to enable them to resist and overcome whatever would bereave us of Life, whether Enemies without, or Diseases within.

2. Another great Property of Food is, to strengthen and invigorate all the animal Faculties, so that they perform all vital Functions and Actions with Ease and Pleasure.

3. A Third great Property of Food is a perfect State of Health, and the Ease and Tranquillity, the Pleasure and Delight, resulting from it, and flowing thro' the whole Body.

4. The Fourth and last Property of Food, I mentioned, is, the preserving and continuing of Life, by uniting, mixing, and incorporating its Spirit and Life, with our vital Spirits, either by being transmuted and changed into their Nature, if it be weaker than they, or by changing their Nature into its own Qualities, if it be stronger than they.

And from the Want of proper Food and Nourishment follow these contrary ill Effects.

Our Bodies become feeble and faint, and unable to resist any Opposition and Violence; our vital Faculties become weak and languid, and cannot perform their proper Offices, without great Difficulty and Pain; there's a general Confusion and Disorder, and, consequently, a general Restlessness and Uneasiness throughout the whole bodily Frame; and, Lastly, for Want of a proper Supply,

ply, the vital Spirits decay, and are exhausted ; and the Lamp of Life, for Want of Oyl, goes out. From the Privation of the necessary Support of Life must follow inevitable Death.

The Two First of these Properties I handled, at large, in a former Discourse, and shall now proceed to the

Third. A Third great Property, or Effect of Food, is a State of Health, and the Ease and Tranquillity, the Pleasure and Delight, resulting from it, and flowing thro' the whole Body.

To this answers, in the Allegory, Peace of Conscience.

The Health of the Body may be said to consist in the due Mixture of the several Humours, and the due Discharge of the proper Offices of the several animal Faculties ; from whence flows an universal Ease and Tranquillity throughout the whole Body. And,

The Health of the Spirit in the due Order and even Temper of the Passions and Affections of the Mind, and the regular and exact Discharge of the several Duties of Religion, from whence flows Ease and Peace of Conscience.

For, as in bodily Health there must be an equal Temperature and Mixture of the many different Qualities, Humours and Juices, so as that no one prevails so far as to over-power the rest ; the hot and cholerick Qualities are not so predominant as to set the Body in a Flame, with Fevers and Calentures ; the cold and phlegmatick Qualities do not so abound, as to make the Body stupid and lethargick. But they are all mixed in such equal Quantities, in such Proportion and Harmony, as to be

be mutually subservient and serviceable one to another; the Moisture to temper and allay the Violence and Fury of the Heat, and the Heat to animate and quicken, to give Life and Activity to the cold and sluggish Phlegm. So in a State of spiritual Health, there must be a regular Order, and even Temper, in the Passions and Affections of the Mind; no one Passion domineers and tyrannizes over the rest, to the Disturbance and Destruction of the whole; but they are so equally mixed and tempered, that they mutually assist one another to the Peace and Preservation of the Whole.

Our Fears are not so predominant as to extinguish all our Hopes, and throw us into the Rage and Fury of Despair; nor our Hopes and Assurances so over-forward, as to banish all Manner of Fear, and so to make us fall into Security and Presumption; but, our Fears justly arising from a Sense of our Sinfulness and Unworthiness, our Misery and Frailty are tempered and qualified by our Hopes in God's Mercy and the all-sufficient Merits of our adorable Redeemer; and our Hopes of Forgiveness of Sins, and eternal Life, are restrained from running Riot by our Fears arising from a Sense of our own Weakness and Misery, not out of any Distrust of God, but of our selves, lest we should not perform the Conditions, and so fall short of the Promises. Our Fears are allayed by Hope, and our Hopes checked by Fear; and they mutually concur, at once, to quicken and to quiet us, to make us labour with Diligence and Activity, yet with Calmness and Tranquillity, in the Service of God, and the Work of our Salvation.

Again,

Again, As in bodily Health, all the Members of the Body, the Head, the Heart, the Stomach, and all the inferior Faculties, do regularly and exactly perform their several Offices: So in a State of spiritual Health, the great Faculties of the Soul, the Understanding, the Will, the Desire, are employed about their proper Objects, and do rightly discharge their proper Duties, and keep in good Order the inferior Powers depending upon them.

Besides all this, all earthly and sensual Lusts and Passions, that war against the Soul, are, in a State of Grace, conquered and subdued; and tho' there be War and Disturbance from Enemies without, yet the Soul, like a *City that is at Unity in itself*, has Peace and Quiet within: As a Man may be healthy and sound, inwardly, notwithstanding a few Scratches, or Cuts, in his Skin.

This Peace and Tranquillity of Mind depends upon the spiritual Food and Nourishment of our Souls, as a State of bodily Health and Ease depends upon corporal Food. When we are in a State of *Grace*, then we are in a State of *true Peace*. But who *can resist God, and be in Peace?* What Peace can we have, while we are at War with, and in open Rebellion against, the God of Peace, and Lord of Hosts, the omnipotent Majesty of Heaven and Earth? God himself hath pronounced that *there is no Peace to the Wicked*, *Isai. xlviii. 22.* The further any one is from Grace, the greater Distance is he at from Peace: And the greater Degrees of God's Grace any Man has, the greater is his Peace.

Peace of Mind is so peculiarly the Work of
God's

God's holy Spirit, that in Scripture it is called *the Peace of God*, and he, *The God of Peace*. S. Paul says, *Peace is the Fruit of the Spirit*. Gal. v. 22. and 2 *Theff.* iii. 16. He prays that the *Lord of Peace would give them Peace always, by all Means*.

The Nature and Effects of this Peace is intimated to us under the Similitude of a River, in that most tender and pathetick Expostulation of God with a Sinner, *Isai.* xlviii. 18. *O that thou hadst hearkened to my Commandments, then had thy Peace been as a River*. As a River flows thro' Waters, and refreshes the Earth; so the Peace of God flows thro' the Soul that is in the Grace of God, and refreshes every Faculty, Power, and Capacity of it, the Understanding, the Will, the Desire, the Affections and Passions, with Ease and Tranquillity, by *feeding* and filling them with their *proper Objects*.

For there is in every *Faculty* a strong Tendency to, and a Kind of *ardent Thirst* after, its *proper Object*. Now our Souls and their divine Faculties being capable of, and, indeed, made on Purpose for the Enjoyment and Possession of God himself; they can never be filled, nor contented with any other Object.

And tho' Mankind are so wretchedly foolish, as to think to satisfy their Souls with Good, from the Enjoyment of the Things of this World; yet notwithstanding their Fulness of all these Things, they are not satisfied and contented; their Souls are empty, and always craving: Like an hungry Stomach filled with Wind, they may be puffed up, but are not satisfied.

The

The Reason of which is, That our Souls being made for God, no other Thing is their proper Object, and being made capable of possessing him, all other Things, whatsoever put together, are too little to fill their Capacities. And to expect to fill and satisfy our Spirits with any Thing less, or other than God, is even more foolish than to imagine a Drop of Water to be big enough to fill a River, and to think to quench one's Thirst by the Noise of Water-falls.

God, then, being the proper *Object* of our Souls, and of their divine Faculties, they must necessarily have a strong Inclination and Tendency towards him. The *Understanding* must have a longing and ardent *Thirst* after the *Knowledge* and Sight of God, and of the ravishing Beauties and Perfections of the divine Nature. The *Will* must necessarily tend to *love* him, and be beloved of him, and to be *united* to him: And the *Desire* burn with ardent Longing to *possess* and enjoy him.

Now, as Nothing but God can satisfy this natural and necessary Longing, and allay this Thirst of the Soul after God: So when he does this, by communicating himself and his holy Spirit to it, and pouring out the Streams of his Grace upon it; it is like *Springs of Water to a dry Ground*, as *Rivers in a dry Place*^a, like quenching ones Thirst with living Water. And the Effect of it is to run thro', and carry along with it Ease and Refreshment to the Soul and all its Faculties.

The *Understanding* is contented with the Knowledge of God, from the *Light of Faith*, the *Will* is quieted with the divine Grace of *Charity*, or

^a Isai. iii. 2.

the Love of God, and the ardent Longing of the *Desire* is allayed and refreshed by a blessed and holy *Hope*.

Thus there is a River whose Streams make glad the City of God^a. Thus God, according to his holy Promise, *pours Water upon him that is thirsty, and Floods upon the dry Ground, by pouring his Spirit upon his Servants^b.* Thus, if any Man *thirst*, he is invited by the Fountain of Life, to come and *draw Water with Joy out of the Wells of Salvation*, Isai. xii. 2. John vii. 37. Then stood Jesus and cried, saying, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his Belly shall flow Rivers of living Water.* This, says the Evangelist, he spake of the holy Spirit.

'Tis true, the *Fulness* of this Refreshment and Rest is the Portion of *another Life*, not of this; but still we may have the First-beginnings and *Foretastes* of it *here*. The Ease and Quiet of our Minds, in this Life, being, in this Respect, like that of Travellers, not that of those who are arrived at their Journey's End. Good Men have the comfortable Assurance of being in the right Way, (and that is no little Quiet and Satisfaction to a Traveller) they take such Refreshments (spiritual I mean, as well as corporal) as the divine Providence is pleased to send them; and as for all the Wants, the Troubles and Fatigues of the Way, they bear them willingly, with Chearfulness and Composure of Mind, for the Glory of God, and the Good of their own Souls; they are animated, sup-

^a Psal. xlv. 4.

^b Isai. xlv. 3.

ported, and refreshed under them, by their Faith in, and Love to God, and by their Hope and blessed Prospect of resting in him, and enjoying *the Pleasures of his House*, and the Glory of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, at their Journey's End.

The Peace of our Minds, like the Health of our Bodies, in this mortal Life, tho' not to be compared with the immortal Life and Vigour, the Pleasure and Delight of the Blessed, is, notwithstanding, a great and inestimable Blessing; nay, one of the greatest that we can enjoy on Earth, being, indeed, the Foundation of, and necessary Disposition for enjoying all other Blessings whatsoever.

There can no Manner of Happiness be enjoyed, without Composure and Tranquillity of Spirit. All bodily Pleasures lose their Relish in a general Want of Health, and universal Decay of Nature. A troubled Mind, like a sick Stomach, nauseates every Thing: And a Soul that is oppressed with a Load of Guilt, stung with Remorse, racked and tortured with terrible Fears and Apprehensions; that is, swoln with Vanity, enflamed with Lust, fired with Pride, mad with Anger, or consumed with Envy, is no more capable of enjoying any Happiness, than a Man, that is racked and tortured with the Gout or Stone, or in the Height of a raging Fever, is capable of relishing a fine Consort of Musick.

And tho' the Pleasure resulting from Peace of Mind, like that flowing from the Health of the Body, may not, perhaps, be so sensible, and appear so great, as when any one of the Senses, or Faculties of the Soul, or Body, is affected with its proper Object in particular; (because in the per-

ceiving any particular Pleasure, the whole Force and Attention of the Soul is drawn that Way, and, as it were, for that Time, contracted into, and concentrated in that one Point; so that the Pleasure appears greater, as the Soul is more affected with it, and the Soul is more affected with it, as it is more attentive to it: Whereas Peace and Health are equally and evenly diffused throughout the Whole of Soul and Body in general, and so, consequently, less remarkable in any one Place in particular.) Yet when we come to lose, or be deprived of either Peace of Mind, or Health of Body, we then learn how great the Pleasure of Possession was, from the great Pain and Uneasiness of their Privation.

And, from the great Want, or total Privation of this heavenly Food, the Grace of God's holy Spirit, the Soul necessarily falls into one or other of these two miserable and dangerous Extreams, either into a State of real Trouble and Uneasiness, or into a false Peace; either into the raging Pain of violent Appetites disappointed, or into a State of Insensibility and Stupidity, or spiritual Lethargy; which, because not so sensibly painful as the first, is, therefore, the less apprehended, and, consequently, the more dangerous and fatal.

Every one is sensible of the great Force and Violence of natural Hunger and Thirst, and the excessive Pain they cause to those, who suffer them in Extremity. But the *spiritual Hunger and Thirst*, (or the Desire of the Soul after Happiness) does as much exceed the *natural* in Vehemence and Ardor, as its Faculties are stronger, and its Object nobler: And that is, as much as the Soul

is a Being of greater Vivacity and Vigour than the Body, as Heaven exceeds Earth, and the Creator is more excellent than his Creatures. And proportionable to the *Strength* of the *Desire*, and the *Excellency* of the *Object* is the *Pain* and *Misery* of a *Disappointment*.

A Soul, then, that is not in a State of Grace, that is not in a State of Conversion, but in a State of Sin, is always empty, unsatisfied and miserable; is always wanting, restless and uneasy, amidst all the Fulness of the Enjoyments and Pleasures of this World; is agitated and tossed, like the Sea in a Storm, with boisterous Passions; is gnawed and preyed upon by Guilt and Remorse, which are the Beginnings and Foretastes of that *unquenchable Fire*, and *never-dying Worm*, which are to be the Portion of the Wicked, to all Eternity.

But if Sinners do not feel any of these Symptoms, upon the Want of God's Grace, it is a Sign they are fallen into the other desperate Condition of Insensibility, or spiritual Lethargy: Which is, by much, the commonest Case. Nay, so common, that I am afraid it is universal: This *spiritual Insensibility*, or Stupidity, being an Effect of Sin, and of the Privation of Grace, *peculiarly proper to this Life*, as the *raging Pain* and Torment of it is *proper to the next*.

For, in this Life, the Soul is not only pressed down, and its Vigour and Activity clogged and fettered with the gross, heavy, sluggish Body, in which it is imprisoned; but is also amused and diverted from attending to its Miseries by Company, Business, and sensual Pleasures: But when, by Death, it is freed from the Prison of the Body,

and the Clog of Flesh, and restored to its natural Sensibility, Vigour and Vivacity, and has Nothing to divert, or call off its Attention from itself; then, it feels its Misery and Want, its Pain and Torment, in the utmost Rigour and Extremity.

But, setting aside the Reason of the Thing, how many do we see in Fact, that live in a State of Sin, in the Neglect of God, and of their Salvation, without any Sense of Shame; without feeling, at least, without attending to, and minding the Stings of Remorse, and Lashes of a guilty Conscience? And, even, of those who are, in some Measure, penitent, how few have a due Sight and Sense of the Horror of Sin, which is, in Truth, and in the Nature of Things, as ugly and hateful, as God is beautiful and amiable.

This spiritual Insensibility is also as dangerous as common: And tho' less painful, yet far more fatal than a disquieted Conscience, and a wounded and troubled Spirit. For, in this Case, the Sense and Experience of Pain and Torment naturally leads Men to seek a Cure, by hearty Contrition, Repentance and Amendment; as the Pain of a Distemper urges a Man to apply himself to a Physician; and the Pinching of Hunger puts a Man upon endeavouring to procure himself Food. But, in the Case of spiritual Insensibility, Men think Nothing of their Danger, because they don't feel it, and so, not apprehending the Disease, neglect the Cure, till they fall from a State of Stupidity in this Life, to that of intolerable Torments in the next: Like Men in a Lethargy, who think themselves in Health, because they are at Ease, and feel no Pain; and so, for Want of proper Care, from a false
and

and fatal Ease, fall into the Pangs and Agonies of Death.

I proceed now to the

4. *Fourth* and *Last* great Property, or Effect of Food, which I proposed to speak to, which is the preserving and continuing of Life, by uniting, mixing and incorporating its Spirit and Life with our vital Spirits, either by being transmured and changed into their Nature, if it be weaker than they, or by changing their Nature into its own Qualities, if it be stronger than they.

It is a Maxim in sound and solid Philosophy, *unde nascitur, inde alitur*, that all Beings have their Food from the Element from which they sprung, and are nourished and supported by Materials of the same Nature with those of which they were at first composed.

Now, our immortal Spirits, being originally the Offspring of God, and Natives of Heaven, must have a Food suitable to their Nature and Original, wholly spiritual and divine : Which can be no other than what we commonly call Grace, or real Communications of Life, Strength, Virtue and Holiness, from the Spirit of God to the Spirits of Men ; by which their Spirits are actually Partakers of the divine Nature and Qualities of the holy Spirit, and are thereby strengthened and refreshed, and their spiritual Life and Vigour continued and encreased : As our Bodies are supported, our Appetites satisfied, our animal Spirits recruited, enlivened, and refreshed, and our Life maintained and prolonged by Meat and Drink.

And this is effected in our Bodies, by the Food's being assimilated and transformed into our Blood

and Spirits, its Nature being weaker than the natural Constitution of our Bodies.

But Spiritual Food has a quite different Property, and works its Effect a quite contrary Way. Its Power being so infinitely great, instead of being changed into our Nature, it transforms us into its own. Like the *Tree of Life* in the Midst of *Paradise*, which was endued with so sovereign a Vertue and Efficacy, as to communicate *Immortality* to those who eat of it. (*Gen. iii. 22.*) So the divine Food of our Spirits, by mixing^s, and, as it were, incorporating itself, and its divine Qualities with them, changes our Souls into its Nature, and renders them divine.

S. Austin represents God speaking to him inwardly, in this Manner, *Cibus sum grandium, cresce, & manducabis me; nec tu me in te mutabis, sicut cibum carnis tue; sed tu mutaberis in me.* Confess. Lib. 7. Cap. 10. §. 2. I am the Food of grown Men, grow, and thou shalt feed upon me; but shalt not change me into thy self, like thy bodily Food, but thou shalt be changed into me.

Thus the holy Scriptures represent the heavenly Change made and wrought in the Souls of Men, by the highest Degrees of Grace, and Communications of God's holy Spirit, they are said to be *renewed in the Spirit of their Mind*, *Eph. iv. 23.* to be *transformed, by the renewing of their Mind by the holy Ghost*, *Rom. xii. 2.* to go from one Degree of Glory to another, till they are changed by the Spirit of the Lord,

^s *S. Macarius passim.*

Tit. iii. 5. they are said to be *renewed after the Image of him that created them*, Col. iii. 10. to be *Partakers of the divine Nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. and to be so united to, as to be *one Spirit with God*. I Cor. vi. 17.

Now, for Want of this celestial Food, our Souls, instead of spiritual, heavenly and divine, become earthly, sensual, devilish. We are *alienated*, as from the Grace, so from the *Life of God*; and are changed into the Nature of those Things we feed upon. We feed our Passions with their beloved Objects; we study, and make it the Business of our Lives, to gratify our sensual Appetites and Lusts, and our Passions of Pride, Ambition, Envy, Hatred, Malice and Ill-nature, and so are, inwardly, transformed and changed into Beasts, and Devils, tho' we appear, outwardly, in the Shape of Men. Thus we are *drowned in Destruction and Perdition*, (1 Tim. vi. 9.) we are spiritually dead, *dead in Trespasses and Sins*; and there is but one Step, the single Thread of Life, between us and the second Death, Death eternal.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew you, and make you sensible of the absolute Necessity of the Grace of God's holy Spirit, by considering it under the Image and Notion of Food, recommended to us, by our Lord, in my Text; and have shewed you, that the like Kind of good, or ill Effects, will certainly follow in the Soul, from our having, or wanting the Grace of God, as will happen to our Bodies from the having, or wanting our daily Bread.

And would to God I had represented it to you, with the Power and Efficacy necessary to raise

raise your spiritual Appetites, and to excite, in you, ardent and restless Desires, an insatiable Hunger and Thirst after this heavenly Food, and Water of Life!

However, may the divine *Power be perfected in my Weakness*, and be so *much the more* glorified, by impressing a strong and lively Sense of it upon your Hearts, *as the Means is more unlikely*, and the *Instrument more unqualified* to produce such an Effect.

If, therefore, we are truly sensible of the Necessity of Grace; if we feel our Want of it, and sincerely and earnestly desire to have our Wants supplied, you will be glad to have me come to the

Second Thing I proposed to do, which was, to shew you the ready and infallible Way to obtain this inestimable Blessing, in Order to animate your Endeavours after it.

And this is made known and declared to us, in these Words of the Text, *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts to your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him? For, Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek, and ye shall find: Knock, and it shall be opened unto you*, ver. 9. And, to beget the greater Assurance in us, it is added in the next Verse, ver. 10. *For, every one that asketh, receiveth: And he that seeketh, findeth: And to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

And is this goodly Pearl of great Price to be purchased at so low a Rate? Is the invaluable and inestimable Blessing to be had upon so easy Terms? Will God himself come into us,
work

work in us, and give and communicate himself to us at our Request! How should the Thoughts of so infinite Goodness and Condescension fill our Hearts with Wonder, Praise and Adoration! and put us, immediately, upon the diligent Performance of the Condition, in Order to obtain the Promise!

When we hear God calling us by his Prophet, *Isai. lv. 1.* saying, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Water, and he that hath no Money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy Wine and Milk without Money, and without Price;* and inviting all Mankind in Person. *John vii. 37.* saying, *If any Man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* And *Rev. xxii. 17.* *Let him that is athirst come, and let him take of the Water of Life freely.* With what Haste and Eagerness should we run and press to the Fountain of the Water of Life and Salvation?

For these, observe them, my Brethren, are the Conditions and Qualifications necessary, on our Part. We must be *hungry* before we can be *filled*^b; we must be *thirsty* before we can be *quenched*; we must *earnestly* and *ardently*, from the very Bottom of our Hearts and Souls, *desire* the Grace of God before we can *obtain* it. And as it is not a faint Wish, so neither is it a careless Endeavour, a dead, formal, lifeless Prayer, now and then uttered with our Lips, but not poured out of the Heart, that will be sufficient. No, we must ask importunately^c, seek diligently, and knock hard. Our Prayers must be frequent, constant, and ardent.

^a Rev. xxi. 6.

^b Magnificat.

^c Luke xi. 8.

Our Prayers must be *frequent*, not only in Private, and in Publick, as often as we are not hindered by indispensable Necessity ; but, more especially, in a devout Participation of the most holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as often as ever we have Opportunity. For, there, we receive him that is *the Bread of Life*, John vi. 48. *The living Bread that came down from Heaven*, ver. 51. Our Souls are *strengthened* and *refreshed* by the Body and Blood of Christ, and the Grace of his holy Spirit accompanying them, as our *Bodies* are by the Elements of *Bread and Wine*.

But because the Distance between the stated Times of Prayer, either publick or private, is pretty great, and between the Returns of the holy Sacrament, much greater, and we are in continual Want of Grace ; we, therefore, must be *continually labouring* for it by *continual Prayer*. As a Man, that works for his Bread, must not sit idle, after his stated Meals, but must labour all Day long for what he eats at once, or twice. Thus we should not content our selves with the set Times of Prayer, but endeavour to live in a *continual* Sense of God's Presence, and be lifting up our Hearts to him in Prayer, *continually*, all the Day long ; even in the Midst of our Business and Employment ; even in Company and Conversation. Did we but labour with Diligence, in this holy Exercise, how would it quicken our spiritual Desires ! How would it prepare our Hearts with Devotion, for the more solemn Times of Worship, and fit us for receiving the Fullness of God's Grace, at the stated Times of Prayer, and receiving the blessed Sacrament ! Just as the continual

Work

Work of a labouring Man does not only procure him Food, but prepares his Body for it; and gets him not only Meat for his Appetite, but an Appetite to his Meat.

This Practice of living and acting under a constant Sense of God's Presence, and the having frequent Recourse to God, in our Hearts, by short and ardent Prayers, even in the Midst of our worldly Business and Employments, is a Duty so necessary for a christian and spiritual Life, that it is urged and inculcated by Christ and his Apostles, more than any other one Duty whatsoever. Thus we are told, *That Men ought always to pray^a, we are commanded to watch and pray^b, to pray without ceasing^c, to pray every where^d, to watch unto Prayer^e, to pray always, with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all Perseverance^f, to continue in Prayer, and to watch in the same with Thanksgiving^g, to continue instant in Prayer^h.* The Force and Strength of which Expressions do, in a Manner, compel us to understand these Passages, not only as Recommendations of a devout Frame and Temper of Mind, always disposed and fit for Prayer, (which itself is the Fruit, Effect and Reward of frequent and fervent Prayer) but also as earnest Exhortations, and strong Obligations to the frequent Use and Exercise of this devout Disposition, by frequent Acts of inward and spiritual Devotion, at all Times, in all Places, and upon all Occasions.

And, from the general Neglect of this holy and necessary Duty and Practice, proceeds the general

^a Luke xviii. 1. ^b Mark xiii. 33. ^c 1 Thess v. 17. ^d 1 Tim. ii. 8. ^e 1 Pet. iv. 7. ^f Ephes. vi. 18. ^g Col. iv. 2. ^h Rom. xii. 12.

Decay of Christian Piety, so much and so justly complained of and lamented. From the Want of this, proceeds our Want of Devotion, in our private, as well as publick Prayers; that we are so cold and careless in them; that God, tho' near in our Mouths, is far from our Hearts; that as soon as we come out of the Church, or Closet, we lay all Thoughts of God aside, we throw ourselves off our Guard, we give up our selves to our foolish and vain Amusements and Diversions, and fall an easy Conquest to the first Temptation that attacks us. From the Want of this it is, that the spiritual Life, the Life of Grace is extinct in so many who are *dead in Sin*; and so feeble and languid, in most, that there's scarce any Sign of it left.

Whereas, if we were but in the *Fear of the Lord all Day long*, and in his Presence, and in continual Prayer to him, we should soon find, by Experience, the Truth of *Solomon's Observation*, in the highest and most infallible Sense of it, *viz. That the Hand of the diligent maketh rich*. If we did but labour diligently, thus, in Prayer to God, he would pour upon us the Riches of his Grace, and we should be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might.

Again, we ought not only to be frequent, but *constant* in Prayer. If we would obtain the Gift of God's Grace and holy Spirit, we must never intermit, or give over, we must labour every Day, and all Day long. The Man, that cannot get Bread if he does not work, must starve if he be idle. Thus we starve our Souls, if we neglect, or omit the regular Times for Prayer and Devotion, or are careless and negligent in letting God always

* Prov. x. 4.

before

before us, and conversing with him, and pouring out our Hearts before him, all Day long.

Nay, if, sometimes, we should seem to meet with a Kind of Repulse, and not immediately obtain our Requests for Grace, in the Manner we had proposed to our selves; yet we must never give over asking, we must be importunate, we must take no Denial. A Beggar, in extreme Necessity, will not be put off with many Denials; he will not quit his Hold for many Repulses, and frequently obtains, by Importunity and Perseverance, what he was denied at first asking.

Lastly, Our Prayers ought to be *ardent* and fervent, not slubbered over coldly, and carelessly with our Lips; but they ought to be the strongest and most earnest Desires of our Souls, proceeding from the very Bottom of our Hearts. We should place our selves in the Presence and Sight of God, and keep our Minds fixed stedfastly upon him, and, with the whole Strength and Power of our Souls, lay open our Miseries and Wants before him, and beg Relief. Extreme Necessity always begs with Fervency. And if we were but as sensible, with Regard to spiritual Things, as we are to temporal, we should feel, and be as much more concerned for the Want of spiritual Food, than bodily. We should as much more ardently desire, and more earnestly pray for the Assistance of God's Grace, than for Health and Life; as the Soul is of more Worth than the Body, and Heaven is preferable to Earth.

Thus frequently, thus constantly, thus ardently should we pray to God, in Order to obtain his holy Spirit, and beg of him, *that he would make us truly sensible of the Necessity of Grace, and raise*
and

and encrease our Desires after it; that he would assist us, and help us to pray for it as we ought; and then that he would hear our Prayers, and fulfil our Desires, by filling us with his holy Spirit. That he would, more especially, pour into our Hearts, those Three divine Graces of Faith, Hope, and Charity; (which are the Springs and Fountains from whence all other Christian Duties and Virtues whatsoever flow) and that he would give us all the other Fruits of the Spirit, in such Manner and Measure, as is most suitable to our Needs and Circumstances of Life, either inward or outward, either of Soul or Body, according to his infinite Wisdom shall see most conducive to his Glory and our Salvation.

And, then, we may securely depend upon it, that *he, upon whom the Eyes of all wait, and who gives them their Meat in due Season, who opens his Hand, and fills all Things living with Plenteousness^a, he that giveth to the Beast his Food, and feedeth the young Ravens that call upon him^b, and has expressly promised to Mankind, saying, Open thy Mouth wide, and I will fill it, Psal. lxxxvi. 10. We may infallibly depend upon it, I say, that he will hear the Cries of his own Sons and Children, (who, before they were disfigured by Sin, were the very Picture and Likeness of their Father) when they call upon him for the heavenly Food and Nourishment of their Spirits; that he will hear their Cry, and will help them; that his Fatherly Bowels will be moved with Compassion towards the Offspring of his own Bowels; and give them such a Measure of his holy Spirit as is necessary for his Glory, and their Good; that he will give them such Supplies of this celestial Food, this Bread and Water of Life, as will nourish them unto eternal Life.*

And this, as surely, as God is merciful and true; as surely, as the Goodness and Power of God exceeds the Goodness and Power of sinful Men. For, *If ye being evil, know how to give good Gifts to your Children: How much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Now to God, &c. JA 67

^a Psal. cxlv. 15, 16.

^b Psal. cxlvii. 9.